

LRA: A REGIONAL STRATEGY BEYOND KILLING KONY

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LRA: A REGIONAL STRATEGY BEYOND KILLING KONY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) has become a regional problem that requires a regional solution. Operation Lightning Thunder, launched in December 2008, is the Ugandan army's latest attempt to crush militarily the one-time northern Ugandan rebel group. It has been a failure. After the initial attack, small groups of LRA fighters dispersed in the Democratic Republic of Congo (Congo), South Sudan and the Central African Republic (CAR), where they survive by preying on civilians. National security forces are too weak to protect their own people, while the Ugandan army, with U.S. support, is focused on hunting Joseph Kony, the group's leader. The Ugandans have eroded the LRA's numbers and made its communications more difficult. But LRA fighters, though disorganised, remain a terrible danger to civilians in this mostly ungoverned frontier zone. National armies, the UN and civilians themselves need to pool intelligence and coordinate their efforts in new ways if they are to end the LRA once and for all.

As the Juba peace process began to fall apart, President Museveni of Uganda worked hard to convince South Sudan and the Congo to participate in a joint military operation against the LRA. He had to overcome their mistrust of his army, notorious for its past abuse of civilians and illegal resource extraction on its neighbours' territory. The U.S. lent its diplomatic weight to advance discussions. Even though both South Sudan and the Congo finally agreed, Uganda undermined its chances of success by failing to coordinate with them, giving them little reason to commit to the fight. In the event, bad weather and leaked intelligence caused Operation Lightning Thunder to fail in its primary objective, killing Kony, and a lack of forward planning allowed the LRA to put on a bloody show of force against Congolese civilians.

The LRA has since exploited the inability of the Congo, South Sudan and the CAR to control their border areas. Small, fast-moving groups of fighters attack unprotected villages to resupply with food and clothes and seize new recruits before heading back to the cover of the forest. Killing and mutilating are part of a strategy of terror to dissuade survivors from cooperating with the Ugandan and other armies. Even with the help of U.S. satellite imagery and audio intercepts, the Ugandan army, the only

force committed to the chase, has had great difficulty tracking its targets. What was supposed to be a sudden, decisive strike has become a slow and very expensive campaign of attrition across three countries. It has also yielded unacceptably high human costs among local civilians, with virtually no accountability for the failure to protect. The weakness of all three state security forces and the limited means of the UN missions in the Congo and South Sudan have left civilians no choice but to fend for themselves, which in many instances they have done well.

In March 2010, Ugandan intelligence reported that Kony was in the southern Darfur region of Sudan, hoping to receive support from his former benefactor, the Khartoum government. He appears now to have crossed back into the CAR, where the bulk of his forces are, but with the fighters so scattered and mobile, it is difficult to pin down his exact whereabouts or the LRA's present numerical strength. However, as the Ugandan army slowly kills and captures more of his Acholi officers, Kony's faithful core is shrinking. This threatens the LRA's cohesion, which depends on the leadership controlling the rank and file through violence and fear. The audio intercept capability the U.S. has given the army makes communication dangerous by any means other than runner. Despite these organisational stresses, LRA fighters continue to cause appalling suffering even in survival mode and would likely continue to do so even if Kony is caught or killed.

To remove this twenty-year-old cancer, a new strategy is required that prioritises civilian protection; unity of effort among military and civilian actors within and across national boundaries; and national ownership. The LRA's need for fresh recruits and the ability of civilians to provide the most accurate information on its activities makes protecting them both a moral imperative and a tactical necessity. Only by pooling intelligence and coordinating activities across the entire affected region can the Ugandan army, its national partners, the UN and civilians hope to rid themselves of the LRA. The Ugandan operation and UN missions, however, offer only temporary support to LRA-affected states. The latter need to put structures in place now to ensure they can cope with what is left of the organisation and its fighters when foreign militaries leave.

Moreover, even complete victory over the LRA would not guarantee an end to insecurity in northern Uganda. To do that, the Kampala government must treat the root causes of trouble in that area from which the LRA sprang, namely northern perceptions of economic and political marginalisation, and ensure the social rehabilitation of the north.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Regarding civilian protection

To the Ugandan and U.S. Governments:

1. Adopt a new strategy that prioritises civilian protection. Review the operation every four months to assess civilian casualties and increase civilian protection measures accordingly.
2. Set a clear goal and timeline for the operation, such as the neutralisation of the LRA leadership within one year.

To the Governments and Armies of Uganda, the Congo, the CAR and South Sudan, the UN Mission in Congo (MONUC) and the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS):

3. Deploy more soldiers and logistical support to LRA-affected areas to provide safe havens by increasing joint day and night patrols in villages, on frequently used routes and especially in larger settlements.
4. Work with civilians to set up unarmed and voluntary community security committees in the Congo and increase the capacity of self-defence groups in South Sudan and the CAR.
5. Rehabilitate roads in LRA-affected areas.
6. MONUC and UNMIS should deploy permanent joint protection teams to monitor human rights abuses committed in LRA-affected areas, and the Congolese government should urgently enforce discipline within the regiments deployed in Haut- and Bas-Uélé, encourage civilian oversight structures to monitor human rights abuses by its soldiers and punish and withdraw offenders from the field.

Regarding unity of effort among military and civilian actors within and across national boundaries

To the U.S. Government:

7. Deploy a team to the theatre of operations to run an intelligence platform that centralises all operational information from the Ugandan and other armies, as well as the UN and civilian networks, and provides analysis to the Ugandans to better target military operations.

To MONUC and UNMIS:

8. Create a regional team with members in both the Congo and South Sudan dedicated to gathering, analysing and sharing information on LRA activities and advising on how best to protect civilians.

To the UN Security Council:

9. Give the UN mission in the CAR and Chad (MINURCAT) a new mandate to remain in the CAR, deploy to the south east and join the MONUC/UNMIS regional team dedicated to gathering, analysing and sharing information on LRA activities and advising on how best to protect civilians.
10. Ensure that the planned and gradual drawdown of MONUC leaves sufficient forces in the LRA-affected areas in the Congo.

Regarding national ownership

To the Ugandan Army, MONUC, UNMIS and MINURCAT:

11. Work more closely with the Congolese, South Sudan (SPLA) and CAR armies through joint patrols and offensive operations, in full compliance with the UN's conditionality policy on support to national armies, and by sharing information so they gain a full understanding of the operation and improve their counter-insurgency tactics.

To the Governments of the Congo, South Sudan (GoSS), and the CAR:

12. Instruct local authorities, police and the security forces to work with communities in the support of self-defence groups; local administrators should register all members, agree in writing on their specific tasks, plan and monitor group activities carefully.

Regarding the root causes of the problem in northern Uganda

To the Ugandan Government:

13. Bring closure to the LRA conflict and minimise the risk of a successor insurgency by implementing the provisions of the agreements negotiated but not finally signed in Juba which relate to reconstructing the north, bringing the worst perpetrators to justice and reconciling civilians with former fighters.

To Donors:

14. Finance a disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) program for LRA combatants and a regional communication campaign and support humanitarian relief and long-term development programs implemented in an accountable and transparent manner in northern Uganda.

Nairobi/Brussels, 28 April 2010

LRA: A REGIONAL STRATEGY BEYOND KILLING KONY

I. OPERATION LIGHTNING THUNDER: A MILITARY FIASCO

The Ugandan army launched Operation Lightning Thunder against the LRA, camped in the Garamba National Park in north-eastern Congo, on 14 December 2008. It was supposed to end the LRA insurgency in a matter of weeks. A surprise airstrike would eliminate the group's high command, and ground troops would quickly kill or capture what fighters remained. Uganda's failure to better plan and coordinate with the Congolese and Sudanese armies and inability to overcome unforeseen obstacles required it to extend the offensive officially until 15 March 2009. In reality, the operation has evolved into a regional manhunt that continues today. The initial attack splintered the LRA into small groups and pushed them north into South Sudan and north west into the CAR where the Ugandan army is still trying to track them down. It also provoked the LRA to make a gruesome demonstration of its continued potency by the massacre of nearly 900 civilians in four weeks.¹

A. LAYING THE POLITICAL GROUNDWORK

Since the Juba peace talks began in June 2006, the Ugandan government had always been a reluctant participant, preferring a military solution to the LRA problem.² However, with Kony's forces gathered in Garamba National Park, it had to persuade the Congolese and Sudanese governments to participate or at least consent before it could launch another offensive.

The Congo's reluctance to allow a Ugandan incursion stemmed largely from the experience of both wars in the country, during which the Ugandan army had been heavily involved in the illegal extraction of Congolese natural resources.³ The Kinshasa elite had little incentive to push out the LRA, because the remote north-eastern Oriental province where it was hiding is of little strategic or economic interest to them.

Museveni took measures to try and earn Kabila's confidence. On 8 September 2007, the two presidents signed a bilateral agreement at Ngurdoto, Tanzania that largely focused on resolving border disputes, but the first article of which provided for stronger efforts to "eliminate all negative forces operating from the two countries", including the LRA.⁴

Even though the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) and Uganda were allies against Kharthoum's army during Sudan's civil wars, the Government of South Sudan (GoSS) was also very reluctant to commit to a joint operation against the LRA. It, too, has bad memories of the Ugandan army's misbehaviour on its territory where the latter has maintained a presence at least since launching Operation Iron Fist against the LRA in 2002 and faces accusations of killing and abusing civilians and the illegal logging of teak trees.⁵ Uganda further

¹ See "The Christmas Massacres: LRA attacks on civilians in Northern Congo", Human Rights Watch, February 2009, p. 29.

² For more on the Juba peace process, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°41, *Peace in Northern Uganda?*, 13 September 2006; Crisis Group Africa Report N°124, *Northern Uganda: Seizing the Opportunity for Peace*, 26 April 2007; Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°46, *Northern Uganda Peace Process: The Need to Maintain Momentum*, 14 September 2007; and Crisis Group Africa Report N°146, *Northern Uganda: The Road to Peace, with or without Kony*, 10 December 2008.

³ The Ugandan army's abuses in the Congo have been well documented. See the reports of the U.N. Panel of Experts on the "Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth of the Democratic Republic of Congo", S/2001/357, 12 April 2001; S/2002/565, 22 May 2002; S/2002/1156, 16 October 2002; and S/2003/1027, 23 October 2003. See also "The Curse of Gold: Democratic Republic of Congo", Human Rights Watch, 1 June 2005, and Sandrine Perrot, "Entrepreneurs de l'insécurité: la face cachée de l'armée ougandaise", *Politique africaine*, no. 75 (1999), pp. 60-71.

⁴ "Ngurdoto-Tanzania Agreement between the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Republic of Uganda on Bilateral Cooperation, Annex to the letter dated 24 September 2007 from the Permanent Representative of Uganda to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council", S/2007/564, 25 September 2007.

⁵ Locals also attest that the Ugandan army purposefully failed to combat the LRA in order to extend the war and benefit from continued military funding. See Mareike Schomerus, "The Lord's Resistance Army in Sudan: A History and Overview", Small

lost the SPLM/A's trust in 2008, when it allowed Khartoum to open a consulate near Gulu in northern Uganda. The GoSS complained that the National Congress Party (NCP) of Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir was using the consulate to infiltrate intelligence agents into its territory. Another source of tension is the perception that Ugandan businessmen in South Sudan are benefiting from an unfair share of Sudan's peace dividends.⁶

There were also mixed feelings in Juba regarding whether South Sudan should be further involved in what some saw as a purely Ugandan problem. South Sudanese President Salva Kiir, however, recognised that the LRA had become a serious threat to Sudanese civilians. While he was open to a military solution, he wanted to give negotiations a chance, especially since twenty years of Ugandan military efforts had failed to crush the group.⁷ The GoSS vice president and chief mediator at the Juba talks, Riek Machar, was against the military option, but largely because he wanted to use them to boost his own stature. Many within the SPLM/A do not trust Machar because he sided with Khartoum during part of the civil war. His leadership of the Juba process, therefore, undermined support for negotiations. If they failed, a new military assault was left as the only viable Plan B.⁸

U.S. support for a joint military operation greatly assisted Uganda's efforts to bring its neighbours on board.⁹ The initial proposal was wholly Ugandan, but President George W. Bush was quick to lend diplomatic backing to a venture that appeared to fall within Washington's counter-terrorism policy.¹⁰ Bush also was said to see in the jungles of central Africa an opportunity for a military success

before leaving office in January 2009. Besides fostering Uganda-Congo cooperation in the Tripartite Plus One framework,¹¹ he personally called both Kabila and Kiir to persuade them to collaborate with Uganda militarily.¹²

Throughout the Juba process, resort to force had been the default if negotiations were unsuccessful. Museveni judged that Kony's failure on 10 April 2008 to sign the final agreement was proof enough that peaceful means had failed. On 30 May, at a meeting in Kampala, he first proposed to Salva Kiir a joint offensive.¹³ By this time, Kabila was, in principle at least, already on board, and the three presidents tasked their defence chiefs to explore in more detail operational aspects and the division of labour. The first formal meeting of the military commanders took place in Kampala on 2 June, but the fact of trilateral planning was not made public until the end of August.¹⁴

Military planning was hampered by the Ugandan army's insufficient coordination and deliberate lack of transparency with regards to both the Congolese and Sudanese. This increased mistrust on all sides, which in turn led both the Congo and South Sudan to play a lesser role in the operation than they might otherwise have done. SPLA troops were to accompany the Ugandans into the Congo as well as protect civilians in South Sudan. However, the Congo refused to allow the SPLA to deploy on its territory.¹⁵ Similarly, the Congolese army agreed only to protect civilians, while Uganda was to fight the LRA.

Preparations gathered momentum towards the end of 2008 with the resumption of LRA attacks against Congolese and Sudanese civilians from 17 September lending the military option greater legitimacy. In the middle of that month, the Congolese army's Operation Rudia, intended

Arms Survey, September 2007; and Clement Ochan, "Assessing Uganda's cross-border pursuit of the Lord's Resistance Army", Feinstein International Center, February 2009, pp. 13-20.

⁶ Crisis Group interviews, senior SPLM/A officials, Juba and Kampala, February 2010.

⁷ Crisis Group interviews, senior SPLA officers, Juba, February 2010.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ The U.S. has been a loyal supporter of Museveni's government since he came to power in 1986 and has consistently been the country's top donor. In 2008, U.S. assistance was worth over \$430 million. Washington provides funding primarily to the health, education and agriculture sectors but also helps in the areas of good governance, economic growth, counterterrorism and peace and security in northern Uganda. See "Foreign Assistance, FactSheet FY 2007-2009 Uganda", U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and "Background note – Uganda", Bureau of African Affairs, U.S. Department of State, February 2010.

¹⁰ In 2001 the Bush administration placed the LRA on the U.S. list of terrorist organisations. See "Statement on the Designation of 39 organizations on the USA Patriot Act's 'Terrorist Exclusion List'", Philip T. Reeker, deputy spokesman, Department of State, 6 December 2001.

¹¹ The Tripartite Plus One Joint Commission on Regional Security in the Great Lakes was created in 2004 with U.S. facilitation. It is intended as a framework within which its members – Uganda, Rwanda, the Congo and Burundi – can agree on joint mechanisms to deal with armed groups in the region.

¹² Crisis Group interview, U.S. and UK military sources, Kampala, June 2008.

¹³ Crisis Group interview, senior Ugandan army commander, Kampala, June 2008.

¹⁴ Ibid. The Ugandan chief of defence forces, General Aronda Nyakairima, chaired the meeting. The former SPLA chief of general staff, Lt. Gen. Oyai Deng Ajak, and the Congolese army's deputy commander, General Dieudonné Amuli, represented their countries. Also in attendance were the U.S. defence attaché to Uganda, Greg Joachim, and MONUC officials. Crisis Group interview, senior SPLA commander, Juba, August 2008. For the first public acknowledgement of joint planning by the three militaries, see "Joint military operations: the FARDC [the Congolese army] to bring more pressure on Ugandan rebels of the LRA", Xinhua, 28 August 2008.

¹⁵ Crisis Group interview, senior SPLA commanders, Juba, 16 February 2010.

to contain the LRA in Garamba Park and encourage defections, finally got underway. Over several weeks, some 3,000 troops deployed to Haut-Uélé district, including many from the republican guard.¹⁶

At a “stakeholders’ conference” in Kampala on 5 November, Machar and the UN Special Envoy for LRA-Affected Areas, former president of Mozambique Joaquim Chissano, gave Kony one last chance to sign the final peace agreement by the end of the month. Kony did meet northern elders near the Ri-Kwangba assembly site in South Sudan at the end of November but instead of signing made new demands. Even though Museveni said he was ready to speak with Kony by telephone, this last failed attempt to obtain his signature signalled the end of the Juba talks and triggered Operation Lightning Thunder.

B. OPERATIONAL BLUNDERS

Details of the three-month operation that began on 14 December 2008 remain difficult to pin down due to conflicting eyewitness reports and Ugandan government propaganda. However, it is possible to identify the factors that most likely caused the operation to fail to destroy the LRA, while resulting in the deaths of nearly 900 civilians.

The plan had three phases: Ugandan fighter jets (MiGs) using U.S. intelligence were to conduct a surprise bombing raid on Kony’s camps,¹⁷ immediately after which helicopter gunships were to deliver special forces to kill or capture surviving LRA elements and secure the camps; Ugandan infantry were then to arrive by land from Nzara in South Sudan for clean-up operations.¹⁸

The air assault was no surprise to the LRA. Ugandan military sources say that despite the secrecy around the preparations, Kony knew beforehand about the imminent attack, allowing him to evacuate his camp in advance.¹⁹ A former LRA member confirmed that Kony knew the offensive was going to happen but said he was under the impression it would begin on 15 December. Accordingly, he had given

orders to evacuate on the evening of 14 December.²⁰ Even if Kony was not expecting the attack so soon, his chances of escape were improved because weather conditions prevented use of the MiGs.²¹ Instead, the slower Mi-24 helicopter gunships led the assault. Those on the ground heard their approach and had time to disperse into the forest.²² The helicopter deployment of special forces simply did not happen, and the infantry took at least a week to reach the camps because of the jungle terrain.²³ This gave Kony time to organise his forces and decide on an escape plan.

During the initial attack and for the next three months while the Ugandan army hunted scattered LRA groups, the SPLA and the Congolese army contributed little if anything to the offensive. The SPLA hierarchy resented Uganda’s failure to fully share information, did not see the operation as its fight and felt, therefore, in no way committed to combating the LRA.²⁴ Some Congolese troops were in Garamba Park from December but largely stood by while the Ugandans sought out the LRA in the forest.²⁵

C. THE LRA’S BRUTAL AND PREDICTABLE REACTION

In the weeks and months following the air strike, the LRA embarked on a strategy to escape capture and prove that it was still a potent and brutal force. The six well-defined groups that had each had its own camp in or near the Garamba Park splintered into many smaller ones that could

¹⁶ Crisis Group interview, MONUC official, Goma, Congo, 19 February 2010. The deployment was too late, as the LRA, aware that Uganda was planning a major offensive, had already set up camps along the Congo-Sudan border to facilitate escape.

¹⁷ U.S. support for the operation also included a team of seventeen analysts and advisers, satellite phones and \$1 million in fuel. See Jeffrey Gettleman and Eric Schmitt, “U.S. aided a failed plan to rout Ugandan rebels”, *The New York Times*, 6 February 2009.

¹⁸ See Ronald R. Atkinson, “From Uganda to the Congo and Beyond: Pursuing the Lord’s Resistance Army”, International Peace Institute, December 2009.

¹⁹ Crisis Group interview, Ugandan army officer, Sam Ouandja, CAR, 10 March 2010.

²⁰ Crisis Group interview, former LRA member, Bangui, CAR, 13 March 2010.

²¹ Crisis Group interview, Ugandan army officer, Sam Ouandja, CAR, 10 March 2010.

²² Crisis Group interview, former LRA member, Bangui, CAR, 13 March 2010.

²³ Crisis Group interview, Ugandan army officer, Sam Ouandja, CAR, 10 March 2010. Coordination within the army was reportedly hampered by ethnic tensions. Museveni gave the lead in organising and executing the mission to those from his own home area of Rushere in western Uganda. He appointed his son, Lt. Col. Muhoozi Kaninerugaba, head of the special forces. The commander of the operation, Brig. Gen. Patrick Kankiriho, and the head of military intelligence, Brig. Gen. James Mugira, are also from the area. Ron Atkinson, “Revisiting Operation Lightning Thunder, Part II”, *The Independent*, 16 June 2009.

²⁴ Crisis Group interviews, senior SPLA officials, Juba, February 2010. By the time of the offensive, the SPLA had reinforced its Eighth Brigade, stationed in Western Equatoria State, with an extra battalion, bringing the troop total to about 3,000. “Attacks on civilians in Western and Central Equatoria States, Southern Sudan, between 15 December 2008 and 10 March 2009 by the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA)”, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, December 2009, p. 11.

²⁵ Crisis Group interview, MONUC official, Goma, Congo, 19 February 2010.

hide more easily in the forest and move more quickly to evade the Ugandan forces. Ten days after the bombing, on Christmas Eve, they began a massacre of civilians in at least three areas in Haut-Uélé district simultaneously. Within less than four weeks, they had killed an estimated 865 innocents in the Congo and South Sudan, abducted at least 160 children, raped dozens of women and girls and displaced many more.²⁶ The horrific suffering inflicted on the local population achieved its purpose. The evidence of coordination demonstrated that the offensive had failed to break Kony's command and control system, and terrified villagers fled to larger towns, allowing the LRA to move in the bush with less risk of observation.

A public outcry demanded an explanation for how this was allowed to happen. The Ugandan army has sought to place responsibility on the Congolese and South Sudanese, saying all parties had agreed that their two forces would protect their respective civilians, while the Ugandans went after LRA fighters.²⁷ The SPLA clearly did not react to LRA attacks.²⁸ The Congolese army failed to deploy in areas near the LRA's main bases, where the massacres took place. While the UN Mission in the Congo (MONUC) is mandated to protect civilians, it would have been difficult for it to do so given its limited means.

The Ugandan army, however, as lead force and coordinator of the operation, was ultimately responsible for failing to prevent the atrocities. With over twenty years' experience in northern Uganda, its leadership knew that the LRA would turn on civilians. It was also aware of its allies' weaknesses. The army leadership was too focused on winning the glory that would come from finally eliminating Kony and his high command to take the safety of civilians seriously into account.

By early 2009, it was clear the operation was going to drag on, and Kabila came under increasing internal pressure to have the Ugandan army leave Congolese territory so as to prevent a repeat of the 1998-2003 occupation. Kinshasa refused to extend permission to operate in the country beyond 15 March.²⁹ The Ugandans kept up appearances by withdrawing from Dungu in the north east and making Nzara in South Sudan their main logistical base. The army

claimed to have left only residual "intelligence squads" behind, with Kinshasa's consent.³⁰ Pro-government media attempted to give a sense that most of the work was already done.³¹ In fact, Operation Lightning Thunder had only just begun. LRA groups continued to disperse, spreading terror where they went, and the army continued search-and-destroy operations unabated.

²⁶ For a comprehensive account of the killings, see "The Christmas Massacres", Human Rights Watch, op. cit., pp. 28-41.

²⁷ Crisis Group interview, Lt. Col. Felix Kulayigye, Ugandan army spokesman, Kampala, Uganda, 23 February 2010.

²⁸ See "Attacks on civilians", op. cit.

²⁹ The Congo initially agreed to allow Ugandan forces to operate on its territory for one month only but following high-level lobbying from Kampala, extended the deadline three times. In order to secure the final and shortest extension, Museveni met Kabila at Kasese in western Uganda on 4 March 2009. See "How Kabila threw out UPDF troops", *The Daily Monitor*, 17 March 2009.

³⁰ Crisis Group interview, Lt. Col. Felix Kulayigye, Ugandan army spokesman, Kampala, Uganda, 23 February 2010.

³¹ *The New Vision* claimed the army had killed 150 LRA fighters, captured five commanders and rescued 300 abductees. Barbara Among, "Ninety days of war in Garamba forest", 13 March 2009.

II. THE HUNT FOR THE LRA

Since March 2009, Uganda's determination to neutralise the LRA, or at least kill Kony, and unstinting U.S. financial and logistical support have caused Operation Lightning Thunder to grow in numbers,³² extend over a cross-border region far bigger than originally expected or planned for and change from a targeted assault into a roaming hunt. The army has honed its anti-guerrilla tactics with some success,³³ but the operation continues to fall short in the protection of civilians. It has also failed to adapt to the reality that the LRA is now a wider problem, whose solution demands full coordination between all regional actors. In its current configuration, therefore, Operation Lightning Thunder is insufficient to permanently eradicate the LRA threat.

A. REGIONALISATION OF THE OPERATION

The border area where the Congo, South Sudan and the CAR meet is practically ungoverned. State authorities, operating from distant capitals, do not have the institutional strength or reach to control their frontier regions, thus making them ideal locations for the LRA to survive. After the air assault, Kony's first plan was to return to his homeland in northern Uganda, but the Ugandan army blocked his escape east. In February 2009, he decided to travel north west into the CAR.³⁴ From incursions in February and March 2008, Kony knew that the CAR army was small and weak. With the Ugandan army already in the Congo and South Sudan, the CAR became the path of least resistance and the best place to regroup. The plan in the middle term, however, was to pass through that country to the Darfur region of Sudan, where he hoped to benefit from the support of his old benefactor, the Khartoum government.³⁵

To continue its campaign of attrition, the Ugandan army has had to maintain operations in the Congo and South Sudan and at the same time pursue the groups that fled into the CAR. It has become increasingly difficult and costly to keep the advanced forces supplied with food, fuel and equipment from Kampala, thus making the government more dependent on U.S. support to keep the operation running. Now that Kony's forces are out of Uganda and the 2011 presidential and legislative elections are approaching, the LRA has fallen far down the list of national priorities, and opposition parties criticise the use of funds that could otherwise be spent on national development.³⁶

Since December 2008, the army has pursued a strategy with two elements. The first consists of tracking down LRA groups and engaging them militarily with the aim of capturing or killing fighters and liberating abducted civilians. The second consists of a communication campaign to encourage fighters to defect. This involves having former LRA combatants make radio appeals to their former brothers-in-arms to accept amnesty and reintegration into either the army or civilian life.³⁷ Ground troops also leave leaflets where the LRA is active showing pictures of former commanders and written calls to disarm.³⁸ These two approaches are intended to be complementary, a stick and a carrot: the greater the military pressure, the more attractive the prospect of disarmament.

The geographic expansion of the operation has obliged the army to adapt its strategy in two crucial ways. Its slowness, if not reluctance, to do so explains the limited results. First, given the vast ungoverned territory into which the LRA has spread and the speed with which it can move

³² The number of troops now dedicated to the operation is difficult to judge. The army intentionally leaked the figure of 1,200 to 2,000, but the real total is more likely to be between 5,000 and 7,000. Crisis Group interview, international observer, Kampala, 21 February 2010.

³³ The operation's incremental successes after the disastrous initial offensive may also be linked to a change in personnel. Museveni no longer insists that top positions be filled by his own Amkola tribe. Crisis Group interview, diplomat, Kampala, 22 February 2010. One notable exception is that his son, Lt. Col. Muhoozi Kainerugaba, still commands the special forces.

³⁴ Crisis Group interview, former LRA member, Bangui, CAR, 13 March 2010.

³⁵ Ibid. After the Sudanese government signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement with the SPLM/A in January 2005 and a government of national unity was created in Khartoum, it became unnecessary and a great deal more difficult for President Bashir and his NCP to continue supporting the LRA as a proxy

force. However, it seems Kony has not given up hope that Khartoum may again provide assistance. In 2007 he sent a reconnaissance mission from Garamba Park towards Darfur that reached Wau in Western Bahr el-Ghazal State, before turning back. Crisis Group interview, MONUC official, Goma, Congo, 19 February 2010. In early 2010, he appears to have briefly crossed into Darfur. See below.

³⁶ In February 2010, the army announced it had spent the 433 billion Ugandan shillings (over \$200 million) allocated to it in July 2009 and required an extra 71.9 billion shillings (about \$34 million). See "18 ministries run out of cash", *The Daily Monitor*, 16 February 2010.

³⁷ Broadcasting similar messages on Mega FM radio station based in Gulu, northern Uganda increased the defection rate of LRA fighters when they were operating in their home country. Crisis Group interview, MONUC official, Goma, Congo, 19 February 2010.

³⁸ The leaflets specify that full amnesty is available to all LRA combatants except those indicted by the International Criminal Court (ICC). Crisis Group interview, Ugandan army officer, Sam Ouandja, CAR, 9 March 2010.

through the forest,³⁹ the army's chances of finding its enemy increasingly depend on access to accurate intelligence. The U.S. has been giving intelligence based on satellite imagery and radio intercepts.⁴⁰ The army obtains additional information from former LRA combatants, some of whom have joined its ranks, from its own aerial surveillance and, most usefully of all, by talking to the local population.⁴¹ It has become aware of the cardinal importance of intelligence in fighting an anti-guerrilla campaign and has made considerable efforts to earn the trust of civilians wherever it operates. Nevertheless, the marked increase in its kill and capture rate since August 2009 shows it took over half a year before it became adept at combating the LRA in the difficult terrain.⁴²

Secondly, in response to the expansion across national borders, the operation has had to involve actors from all countries. The Congolese, South Sudanese and Central African armies as well as the UN peacekeepers in the Congo and South Sudan are officially engaged in protecting civilians from LRA attacks. However, the Ugandan army, other national armies and the UN have not coordinated closely enough to maximise the potential of their com-

bined resources either in tracking down the LRA or encouraging defections. The same mutual suspicion at the political level that undermined the initial attack has continued to hamper collaboration. On the ground too, while levels of coordination differ in each country, only the Ugandans have proved themselves truly invested in and committed to destroying the LRA.

1. Democratic Republic of Congo

At a ceremony on 15 March 2009, the Ugandan army officially handed over the operation to the Congolese army. In practice, it continued to take the lead in pursuing groups of LRA fighters in both Haut-Uélé and Bas-Uélé districts.⁴³ It maintained bases in Nambia, Doruma, and Bangadi in Haut-Uélé district, and in Banda in Bas-Uélé.⁴⁴ In response to new intelligence, its troops move frequently, on foot or, when possible, by truck or helicopter.⁴⁵

Since operations began, Ugandan patrols have played a cat-and-mouse game in which LRA fighters have often eluded their would-be captors. In mid-2009, many LRA moved north west into the CAR, and it is likely many Ugandan troops followed, not least because Kony was suspected to be among those that relocated. On 3 November, an operation against a 150-strong group near Faradje ended successfully with the surrender of Lt. Col. Charles Arop, a senior LRA commander responsible for the massacres in that area the year before.⁴⁶ The area east of Dungu is now relatively quiet. Attacks are most frequent in the area between Bangadi, Niangara, Duru and Dungu in Haut-Uélé district, while LRA activity seems to be on the rise further west in Bas-Uélé.

Congolese civilians have come to greatly appreciate the presence of the Ugandan soldiers, who protect them from the LRA and, in stark contrast with their own national forces, do not abuse them or extort money.⁴⁷ Villagers provide the Ugandans with news on LRA movements,

³⁹ An international military expert estimated that LRA fighters can cover 40km a day. Crisis Group interview, international expert, Kampala, 22 February 2010.

⁴⁰ Crisis Group interview, diplomat, Bangui, CAR, 7 March 2010.

⁴¹ Crisis Group interview, Ugandan army officer, Sam Ouandja, CAR, 9 March 2010. The army has for some time realised the benefits of having former LRA combatants in its ranks. In 2004 and 2005 it created the 105th and 106th battalions, consisting largely of ex-LRA, and reportedly deployed them to great effect in South Sudan and northern Uganda. Questions still remain, however, on the wisdom of employing fighters with human rights abuses in the security forces. See Tim Allen and Mareike Schomerus, "A hard homecoming: Lessons learned from the reception center process in Northern Uganda", study commissioned by USAID and UNICEF, August 2006; and Sandrine Perrot, "Les meilleurs ennemis de Museveni: dilemmes et usages politiques de la réintégration des anciens commandants de la Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) au Nord de l'Ouganda", in Nathalie Duclos (ed.), *L'adieu aux armes? Parcours d'anciens combattants* (Karthala, 2010), pp. 265-295.

⁴² Crisis Group interview, MONUC officer, Goma, Congo, 19 February 2010. By March 2009 the Ugandan army claimed to have killed 98 LRA combatants and captured fourteen. Uganda Broadcasting Corporation (UBC) Radio, 25 March 2009. There were then no major reports of killings or captures until those in August in the CAR. See below. Ugandan military intelligence said that by the end of February 2010 the army had killed 305 LRA combatants and captured 50, and a further 81 had defected. See "Trail of Death: LRA Atrocities in Northern Congo", Human Rights Watch, March 2010, p. 16. Since then the army claims to have killed at least another fifteen in the village of Dembia, Mbomou prefecture, CAR. "New LRA rebel wave attacks kills 26", Africanews.com, 31 March 2010. This brings the total of LRA killed or captured to 370, including 258 since August.

⁴³ The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimated in February 2010 that some 1,000 Ugandan troops were still operating in the Congo. Crisis Group interview, OCHA officer, Dungu, Congo, 16 February 2010. However, others estimate that there could be as many as 2,000 to 3,000. "Trail of Death", op. cit., p. 16.

⁴⁴ "Trail of Death", op. cit., p. 16.

⁴⁵ Crisis Group interviews, international NGOs, MONUC officers, Dungu, Congo, February 2010.

⁴⁶ Crisis Group interview, military official, Kampala, 22 February 2010. See also "Senior rebel commander surrenders, Ugandan defense ministry says", CNN, 5 November 2009.

⁴⁷ This good behaviour, a long way from the Ugandan army of the 1990s and 2000s, most likely results from the intensive U.S. human rights training, as well as the troops receiving regular and good pay (reportedly \$50 per day) and food. Crisis Group interview, international NGO, Bangui, CAR, 6 March 2010.

and former members of the now disbanded self-defence groups sometimes act as scouts.⁴⁸

The Congolese government has repeatedly played down the LRA threat.⁴⁹ With seemingly intractable problems in the Kivus in the east and sporadic insecurity in western Equateur province, it would rather not have to devote more resources to the north east. Nevertheless, with logistical support from MONUC, its army launched Operation Rudia II in March 2009, seeking to contain the LRA and protect civilians.⁵⁰ The Congolese army conducts joint patrols and sometimes joint operations with the Ugandans.⁵¹ However, it tends to stay in and around towns and villages, while the Ugandans head into the forest. Overall, there has been very little exchange of information between the UPDF, the Congolese and MONUC, thus limiting the ability of the three militaries to protect civilians in a coordinated manner and help each other track down LRA fighters.

Uganda has put a great deal more money and manpower into killing and capturing LRA combatants than into efforts to induce defections. To achieve the latter, the Uganda Broadcasting Corporation (UBC) radio in Kampala and Mega FM in northern Uganda air appeals, often from former LRA commanders, that fighters surrender and accept amnesty, and the army distributes leaflets. MONUC's nationwide program to dismantle domestic and foreign armed groups active in the Congo also includes measures to encourage LRA combatants to defect and return to their country of origin.⁵² MONUC airs radio messages and organises the dissemination of leaflets,⁵³ but with limited

success.⁵⁴ While LRA commanders try hard to prevent defections, including by forbidding fighters to listen to the radio and read the leaflets,⁵⁵ the lack of coordination and consistency between the Ugandans and MONUC also reduces the effectiveness of their efforts to erode the LRA.⁵⁶

2. South Sudan

Following the start of operations in December 2008, the LRA increased cross-border incursions into South Sudan. In response, Ugandan troops deployed in Western Equatoria State and began rapid reaction operations. Reports of LRA attacks show that a group of fighters based near Aba in the Congo was also terrorising Sudanese civilians over the border in Yei County, Central Equatoria State. However, for much of 2009 a higher concentration of LRA activity was reported in Western Equatoria. From mid-year, attacks in this area decreased, reflecting the LRA's movement further into the CAR. From October, reports emerged of killings and abductions in Raja County, Western Bahr el-Ghazal State, bordering southern Darfur,⁵⁷ but it is not possible to say for certain whether this was the LRA or groups imitating its modus operandi.⁵⁸ Attacks petered out in mid-December, and the Ugandan army says there are no more LRA elements in South Sudan,⁵⁹ but sporadic attacks resumed in April 2010.⁶⁰ The army maintains its logistics base in Nzara, Western Equatoria, but the principal theatre of operations is now the CAR.

Neither the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) nor the SPLA have reported instances of the Ugandan army committing human rights abuses against civilians.⁶¹ On the contrary, it has maintained good relations with local communities,

⁴⁸ Crisis Group interview, OCHA officer, Dungu, Congo, 16 February 2010.

⁴⁹ "LRA no longer a military threat in DRC, says defence minister", Agence de Presse Africaine, 14 February 2010; "DRC rejects report of LRA massacre", *Mail and Guardian*, 31 March 2010.

⁵⁰ On 31 March 2010, the Congolese government officially prolonged the operation. "Le conseil du gouvernement présidé mercredi par le Premier ministre constate un calme relatif sur l'ensemble de la République", Digitalcongo.net, 3 April 2010.

⁵¹ The French government has sponsored Ugandan liaison officers to learn French so they can better communicate with the militaries, civilian authorities and local populations in both the Congo and the CAR. Crisis Group interview, French military attaché, Kampala, 24 February 2010.

⁵² This process is officially known as Disarmament, Demobilisation, Repatriation, Resettlement and Reintegration (DDRRR).

⁵³ A relay station in Dungu, Haut-Uélé district, transmits the Kinshasa-based, UN-funded Radio Okapi, which airs "come home" messages occasionally to the surrounding area. The MONUC DDR team also travels around the area with a mobile station dedicated to this purpose, but it has a range of only five kilometres. Crisis Group interview, MONUC DDR officer, Goma, Congo, 19 February 2010.

⁵⁴ In 2009, MONUC repatriated 45 LRA combatants (seventeen Ugandans, sixteen Sudanese and twelve Central Africans); in 2010, as of 31 March, it had repatriated eight more Ugandans. Crisis Group email correspondence, MONUC officer, Goma, 6 April 2010. The total of defections in the Congo is higher than this, because the majority turn themselves in to the Ugandan army rather than MONUC or the Congolese army. Crisis Group interview, international expert, Kampala, 21 February 2010.

⁵⁵ Crisis Group interview, former LRA member, Bangui, CAR, 13 March 2010.

⁵⁶ Crisis Group interview, international expert, Kampala, 21 February 2010.

⁵⁷ "LRA kill five people in South Sudan's Raja County", *Sudan Tribune*, 22 October 2009.

⁵⁸ Crisis Group telephone interview, international military expert, Juba, 31 March 2010; Crisis Group email correspondence, UNMIS officer, Juba, April 2010.

⁵⁹ Crisis Group interview, Ugandan army officer, Sam Ouandja, CAR, 9 March 2010. "SPLA foils LRA fresh attacks in Bahr El-Ghazal", *Sudan Tribune*, 18 December 2009.

⁶⁰ "Sudan: LRA suspected rebels attack Yambio, eyewitnesses say", Miraya FM, 30 March 2010.

⁶¹ Crisis Group interviews, UNMIS and SPLA officials, Juba, February 2010.

self-defence groups known as Arrow Boys and church groups, using their information networks to better target operations.⁶² In contrast, the Ugandans and the SPLA have not been cooperating at the operational level.⁶³ As in the Congo, the Ugandans are doing the lion's share of the hunting and fighting, while the SPLA, lacking transport, communications equipment and expertise, has tended to remain in its bases. The SPLA, largely consisting of ethnic Dinka, has also had difficulty working with the local Zande.⁶⁴

Western Equatoria State authorities have used Yambio FM to broadcast "come home" messages to LRA combatants, and some former fighters have appealed for disarmament on Miraya FM, the Juba-based station run by UNMIS. The UN collaborates with national authorities on a disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration program, but this does not currently cover LRA combatants.⁶⁵

3. Central African Republic

Among the countries of the region and even the continent, the CAR stands out for the weakness of its institutions.⁶⁶ Its army is too small and lacks the means and the training to secure a territory slightly larger than France.⁶⁷ While international troops help maintain security in the west and north east,⁶⁸ minimal state forces are deployed in the south east.⁶⁹ There was, therefore, little to stop LRA fighters

crossing the Mbomou River from the Congo in May 2009 and begin raiding villages around Obo, the main town of south-eastern Haut-Mbomou prefecture.⁷⁰ The following month, the government, aware of its army's weakness, welcomed the Ugandans into the country.⁷¹ They quickly set up headquarters in Obo, from where they began launching search and destroy expeditions into the surrounding forest and deploying to settlements along the Mbomou River to the west.

Aided by local informants the Ugandan army started capturing and killing LRA fighters at a higher rate, among them several high-ranking commanders. In August 2009 it claimed to have captured Major Okot "Atiak", who is held responsible for the massacre of 250 civilians at Atiak village in Gulu district, northern Uganda, in April 1995.⁷² Two weeks later, it claimed to have killed a group of five fifteen kilometres north east of Obo, including Lt. Col. Santos Alit, a former member of the LRA's delegation to the Juba talks.⁷³ The army announced its biggest success on New Year's Day 2010, when it allegedly killed Bok Abudema, whom a former LRA member confirms was Kony's close adviser.⁷⁴

Under pressure, the LRA scattered further north. Soon after it attacked civilians near Djema, Haut-Mbomou prefecture, in November 2009, the Ugandan army set up a base there.⁷⁵ As the LRA left the forest and entered more sparsely covered scrub, the Ugandans began to use a light aircraft to track what they believed to be Kony's group as it hurried north. The Ugandans wanted to prevent Kony from crossing into Darfur, part of northern Sudan, where neither they nor their SPLA allies could officially pursue him. To do so, they established in January 2010 a third base in the north-eastern village of Sam Ouandja, Haute-Kotto prefecture, thereby stretching their supply lines even

⁶² Crisis Group interview, international expert, Dungu, Congo, 17 February 2010.

⁶³ Crisis Group telephone interview, international military expert, Juba, 31 March 2010.

⁶⁴ In 2010, the SPLA has become slightly more effective through the recruitment of Arrow Boys. Crisis Group telephone interview, international military expert, Juba, 31 March 2010.

⁶⁵ Crisis Group interview, MONUC officer, Goma, Congo, 19 February 2010.

⁶⁶ For an analysis of the CAR's past conflicts and recent efforts to put the country back on track, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°136, *Central African Republic: Anatomy of a Phantom State*, 13 December 2007; Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°55, *Central African Republic: Untangling the Political Dialogue*, 9 December 2008; and Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°69, *Central African Republic: Keeping the Dialogue Alive*, 12 January 2010.

⁶⁷ The CAR army counts 5,000 soldiers, but only about 1,500 of those are operational. Crisis Group interview, military official, Bangui, CAR, 7 March 2010.

⁶⁸ The Mission for the Consolidation of Peace in the CAR (Mission de consolidation de la paix en Centrafrique, MICOPAX), a multi-country African force, provides security in the west of the country, while the UN Mission in the CAR and Chad (Mission des Nations unies en République centrafricaine et au Tchad, MINURCAT) is present in the north-eastern Vakaga prefecture.

⁶⁹ The CAR army maintains bases in Obo and Bangassou and in response to the LRA attacks has also deployed small numbers to Rafai and Mboki. Crisis Group interviews, local and international NGO workers, Bangui, CAR, March 2010.

⁷⁰ "Rebel terror spreads to CAR", BBC, 7 October 2009. For a list of LRA attacks and other security incidents in the CAR in 2009-2010, see Appendix C.

⁷¹ The CAR first joined the regular meetings of Congolese and Ugandan military chiefs to assess the operation in June 2009. "MONUC's support in fight against LRA seen as 'very important and decisive'", MONUC press release, 11 June 2009. The Ugandan army did not officially admit to operating in the CAR until early September 2009. "L'armée ougandaise reconnaît opérer en Centrafrique contre la LRA", Agence France-Presse, 8 September 2009.

⁷² "Uganda troops catch top rebel in Central African Rep.", Reuters, 10 September 2009.

⁷³ "Another LRA commander killed", *The New Vision*, 15 September 2009.

⁷⁴ "Army kills Kony's third in command", *The New Vision*, 2 January 2010. Crisis Group interview, former LRA member, Bangui, 13 March 2010.

⁷⁵ Crisis Group interview, OCHA officer, Bangui, 6 March 2010.

more.⁷⁶ But they were too late. Their intelligence reports that in early January Kony led his group across the border to an area near Kafia Kingi in southern Darfur.⁷⁷

Khartoum denied the presence of any LRA fighters in northern Sudan and rejected SPLA claims that it intended to use the LRA again as a proxy, to destabilise the South during the April 2010 national elections.⁷⁸ In February and March, other groups continued attacks further west at Mboki, Zemio, Dembia, Rafai and as far as Nzako and Yalinga in Haute-Kotto prefecture,⁷⁹ and in early April, Kony, reportedly unable to find enough food in Darfur, crossed back into the CAR.⁸⁰ His alleged return and the increase in the frequency of LRA attacks in multiple locations make the CAR the principal battleground in the fight against the LRA.

The Ugandan troops seem to have made a special effort in the CAR to win the hearts and minds of the civilian population. In Obo they tell local authorities which zones are safe for civilians to access; conduct night patrols to ensure the safety of inhabitants, refugees and the displaced; facilitate the work of missionary and humanitarian groups; and provide free medical assistance twice a week.⁸¹ Some soldiers have been prone to drink too much of the local alcohol and seek the company of local women, but commanders have taken measures to mitigate this with rela-

tive success.⁸² Despite these efforts to earn trust, however, the failure to prevent an increase in LRA attacks has made civilians suspicious.⁸³

The Ugandans have maintained relatively good relations with the Central African army,⁸⁴ whose poorly trained and underequipped troops mostly keep to their barracks.⁸⁵ Rebellions in the densely populated and agriculturally rich north west pose a greater threat to the Bozizé regime than the LRA, though in response to an increase in attacks in March 2010, the army did deploy two additional sections (50 to 60 troops) to LRA-affected areas.⁸⁶ It is all the government is willing or able to spare and is unlikely to significantly increase its ability to protect civilians.

The Ugandan army claims it is distributing leaflets encouraging fighters to defect in the CAR,⁸⁷ but neither it nor the UN is running radio broadcasts that cover the south east of the country. The army takes captured Ugandan LRA fighters and those who surrender back to Uganda, and national and international NGOs and church organisations take care of children who escape. The UN Development Programme (UNDP) is implementing a national DDR process, but covers only rebel groups that have signed peace agreements with the government, not the LRA.⁸⁸

Small LRA groups have scattered over such a large un-governed area and stretched the Ugandan army and its national counterparts so thin that they can relatively easily continue to avoid capture while pillaging and abducting new recruits from unprotected villages. The further they go, the greater the logistical challenges faced by the Ugandans. However, the LRA's geographical spread also

⁷⁶ The Ugandan army arrived on foot accompanied by a CAR officer. Bozizé had given his permission for the redeployment but MINURCAT, which had troops in Sam Ouandja at the time, did not know in advance the Ugandans were coming. Crisis Group interviews, OCHA officer, Bangui, 6 March 2010; mayor of Sam Ouandja, Sam Ouandja, 9 March 2010.

⁷⁷ The Ugandan army estimates that Kony's group numbers 70 to 80, half armed combatants, the rest women and children. Crisis Group interview, Ugandan officer, Sam Ouandja, CAR, 9 March 2010.

⁷⁸ On 31 March 2010 at Ezo in South Sudan, the UPDF captured LRA commander Okello "Mission". At a press conference in Kampala organised by the Ugandan authorities, he said he had been with Kony in the group that went into southern Darfur and that they had met officers of the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) "to resume the partnership with the government of Sudan". The officers, he said, offered the LRA a "safe corridor" to central Sudan, food and medicine. "Ugandan LRA rebel commander speaks of Sudan support", *The New Vision*, 6 April 2010.

⁷⁹ On 9 February 2010, about 40 LRA fighters attacked Nzako, Mbomou prefecture, kidnapping 30 to 40 inhabitants and killing at least two. "Ugandan rebels kidnap 40 in Centr. Africa", Agence France-Presse, 22 February 2010. As of April 2010, this is the furthest west LRA elements have been sighted.

⁸⁰ "Ugandan rebel leader quits Sudan, in CAR: Uganda", Reuters, 2 April 2010.

⁸¹ Crisis Group telephone interview, Obo-based missionary, 5 February 2010.

⁸² Crisis Group interview, former mayor of Obo, Bangui, CAR, 17 March 2010.

⁸³ Inhabitants and the local authorities of Rafai and Zemio, Mbomou prefecture, noticed that after the arrival of the Ugandan army in the area, the LRA appeared better clothed and equipped. Crisis Group telephone interview, Central African NGO worker, 8 April 2010. Women of Bangassou, Mbomou prefecture, demonstrated for the UPDF's departure. However, support for the Ugandan army remains strong in Haut-Mbomou prefecture. "Le Haut-Mbomou dit non au départ des Forces armées ougandaises", *Le Confident*, 6 April 2010.

⁸⁴ Some Ugandan army liaison officers speak French; CAR officers trained in the U.S. speak some English. Crisis Group interview, military official, Bangui, 7 March 2010.

⁸⁵ Crisis Group telephone interview, Obo-based missionary, 5 February 2010; Crisis Group interviews, international NGOs, Bangui, CAR, March 2010.

⁸⁶ Crisis Group email correspondence, military official, Bangui, CAR, 6 April 2010.

⁸⁷ Crisis Group interview, Ugandan army officer, Sam Ouandja, CAR, 9 March 2010.

⁸⁸ For the obstacles already facing UNDP's DDR program in the CAR, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°69, *Central African Republic: Keeping the Dialogue Alive*, 12 January 2010.

strains its own cohesion and makes it more vulnerable to the attrition campaign.

B. THE LRA ON THE RUN

Uganda's portrayal of Operation Lightning Thunder as a resounding success is delusional. However, the army has eroded and disorganised Kony's forces so that the LRA is now a causeless and homeless guerrilla group for which the most pressing concern is day-to-day survival. But it would be unwise to write it off too hastily. The LRA has demonstrated for over twenty years an unparalleled resilience, and even if the organisation as a whole is close to disintegration, isolated groups of fighters can still cause enormous suffering.

To demonstrate the progress of its counterinsurgency the Ugandan government says it has killed or captured 370 LRA fighters and claims there are only about 200 remaining.⁸⁹ As a measure of the operation's success and of the LRA's health, such figures are problematic.⁹⁰ First, since verification is impossible, the government is open to accusations of manipulating the numbers for political purposes. Secondly, the fluid nature of the LRA's membership makes it very difficult to say who is a combatant and who is a civilian. The LRA is almost constantly abducting villagers, killing those seen as useless or unnecessary, training some to become fighters and keeping others – women and girls in particular – as workers and sex slaves. Thirdly, now that the LRA is scattered in small groups across a huge area, it is even more difficult to know its numbers.⁹¹

The army also emphasises the LRA's shortage of weapons and ammunition to show that it is winning.⁹² This is an imperfect measure, because in asymmetric warfare, the opposing forces do not meet in the type of general combat in which superior firepower is crucial to victory. Instead, the fight is over control of the civilian population – the LRA's source of supplies, intelligence and recruits. For this, the movement does not need a large arsenal. Clubs and machetes are enough, if not better suited, to spread terror.

To better assess how much Operation Lightning Thunder has weakened the LRA, it is necessary to judge the group's cohesion, capacity for coordinated action and motivations. Its Acholi core leadership and those non-Acholi recruited since the LRA left northern Uganda have different motivations for fighting. For both, however, Kony's role as leader is key. In the past, by presenting himself as a charismatic political, military and spiritual leader he was able to inspire others to fight for him. Certain beliefs either in Kony's political cause or his spiritual powers motivated other Acholi, also bound to him by ethnicity, to follow him. But the new, forcefully recruited members, especially the non-Acholi, fulfil Kony's will because they have no choice. The system of control that he and his commanders have adopted relies on violence and creating the illusion that they have mystical powers.⁹³ Fear and obedience, therefore, motivate the LRA's non-Acholi lower ranks to carry out the orders of their commanders.

Since Operation Lightning Thunder began, it has become increasingly difficult for the LRA leadership to maintain this system of control. As mentioned above, the Ugandan army has killed or captured several of Kony's Acholi high command. Because Kony does not trust non-Acholi, he has promoted few if any of the new, non-Ugandan recruits to officer rank.⁹⁴ The high rate of abductions, especially of children, suggests newcomers are still swelling the lower ranks. The Acholi high command is, therefore, likely shrinking relative to the non-Acholi rank and file.⁹⁵ Now that Kony's loyalists – those motivated by political, spiritual or ethnic allegiance to him – are fewer and spread over a greater area, it is likely becoming more difficult for them to keep control over the greater number of forced foreign recruits who would rather return home than live in the bush.

⁸⁹ Crisis Group interview, Lt. Col. Kulayigye, Ugandan army spokesman, Kampala, 23 February 2010. See also fn. 42 above.

⁹⁰ See Jonathan J. Schroden, "Measures for Security in a Counterinsurgency", *Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 32, no. 5, pp. 715-744.

⁹¹ When all LRA members were congregated in the Garamba Park, it was already difficult to judge their number. Based on testimony from those who escaped, observers put this at 600-700. Crisis Group interview, MONUC officer, Goma, Congo, 19 February 2010.

⁹² The Ugandan army reports collecting weapons with empty magazines from bodies of LRA fighters in the CAR and says that LRA fighters usually use clubs or machetes in their attacks. Crisis Group interview, Ugandan officer, Sam Ouandja, CAR, 9 March 2010.

⁹³ In Garamba Park, if LRA commanders caught someone trying to escape, they would instruct new recruits to stand in a circle and beat the individual with clubs 200 times. If the victim died before 200 blows were administered, they were to continue to beat the corpse. This is an example of how the LRA used violence to frighten recruits into obedience. Crisis Group interview, former LRA member, Bangui, CAR, 13 March 2010. Escapees in the Congo report that the LRA still uses mystical devices to instil fear in abductees to prevent escape attempts. A girl kidnapped for one week said she and others had to apply a magical liquid to their skin every night that would kill them if they tried to run away. Crisis Group interview, MONUC officer, Dungu, Congo, 16 February 2010.

⁹⁴ Crisis Group interviews, MONUC officer, Goma, Congo, 19 February 2010; former LRA member, Bangui, CAR, 13 February 2010.

⁹⁵ While based in Garamba Park, Kony tried to counteract this dilution of the original Ugandan core by forcing new recruits to learn and speak Acholi. Crisis Group interview, former LRA member, Bangui, CAR, 13 March 2010.

The Ugandan army is right in saying that Kony is the LRA's "centre of gravity".⁹⁶ His leadership, strengthened by having survived so many years in the bush, is a strong motivating factor for his commanders. Other top commanders still active include his number two, Maj. Gen. Okot Odhiambo, and Brig. Gen. Dominic Ongwen, both indicted by the International Criminal Court (ICC). The latter leads the group operating near Bangadi in Haut-Uélé district, Congo.⁹⁷

Communicating with his forces has become increasingly difficult for Kony if not impossible. In the past, he used satellite phones but, with good reason, he has become increasingly concerned that his calls can be monitored and his location detected. Initially he sent a man far from his position to use a phone, but army intelligence says he has now stopped using them completely.⁹⁸ This greatly reduces his ability to motivate as well as control other groups.

In recent attacks in south-eastern CAR, groups of LRA fighters have been looking for means of communication.⁹⁹ It seems clear they are trying to re-establish contact with other groups to receive new orders and better coordinate their action. Either because they do not have phones or fear using them, the LRA has increasingly been using runners to relay messages.¹⁰⁰ This may still be possible in the Congo, where groups have relatively fixed areas of operation, but is much more difficult in the CAR, where they appear to be constantly on the move.

The difficulty of communication between scattered groups makes it harder for Kony and his commanders to organise coordinated action. Three independent sources, including an SMS sent to Lt. Col. Charles Arop, who surrendered in November 2009, indicate that Kony's orders as of September 2009 were to regroup in the CAR.¹⁰¹ There is no evidence to suggest that the LRA achieved even this tem-

porary objective. Instead, each group, numbering between five and 40, appears to act largely autonomously.¹⁰²

Different groups display different levels of organisation and discipline.¹⁰³ Ongwen's group demonstrated a relatively high level of planning and organisation in carrying out the December 2009 massacre in the Makombo area of Haut-Uélé district, Congo.¹⁰⁴ The presence of a top commander is likely to ensure greater discipline than in smaller, leaderless splinter groups.

Fewer Acholi commanders, greater distances separating groups and a lack of communication between them have destabilised the control system that allows the LRA leadership to motivate and organise its troops. Despite local variations, it is likely, therefore, that the LRA has a generally low level of cohesion and coordination. If it does not overcome these obstacles, it may well be close to collapse as an organisation.

Individuals and groups, however, have proved extremely resilient. They are accustomed to living in equatorial forests. Even in the savannah further north in eastern CAR and South Sudan, they have shown an ability to survive that one Ugandan soldier described as "inhuman".¹⁰⁵ Where villages and agricultural produce are scarce, the LRA has taken cows from the nomadic Mbororo herders, dried the meat to carry with them and boiled the skins for broth.¹⁰⁶

⁹⁶ Crisis Group interview, Ugandan officer, Sam Ouandja, CAR, 9 March 2010.

⁹⁷ Crisis Group interviews, MONUC officer, Bunia, Congo, 15 February 2010; Ugandan officer, Sam Ouandja, CAR, 9 March 2010.

⁹⁸ Crisis Group interview, Ugandan officer, Sam Ouandja, CAR, 9 March 2010.

⁹⁹ When a group of fifteen to twenty LRA fighters attacked Rafai, Mbomou prefecture, on 19 February 2010, they demanded to know where the Thuraya satellite phones were and took all the electronic items they could find, including mobile phones. They also looked for phones during attacks on Mboki, Haut-Mbomou prefecture, on 19-20 March and again on Rafai on 20-21 March. Crisis Group interviews, NGO and church representatives, Bangui, CAR, March 2010.

¹⁰⁰ Crisis Group interview, MONUC officer, Goma, Congo, 19 February 2010.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² In early March 2010, the Ugandan army reported that a group of twenty, allegedly led by Major David Lakwo, attempted to cross back from the CAR into the Congo, apparently to rejoin Ongwen's group near Bangadi. Crisis Group interview, officer, Sam Ouandja, CAR, 9 March 2010.

¹⁰³ NGO workers in the Congo distinguished between groups of LRA fighters in dirty and tattered clothes, who were particularly violent in their attacks on villagers, and groups that wore cleaner military uniforms and carried out more controlled attacks, sometimes only communicating by whistling. Crisis Group interview, NGO worker, Dungu, Congo, 16 February 2010.

¹⁰⁴ See "Trail of Death", *op. cit.*

¹⁰⁵ Crisis Group interview, Ugandan army officer, Sam Ouandja, CAR, 9 March 2010.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid; Crisis Group interview, former LRA member, Bangui, CAR, 13 March 2010. The Mbororo are nomadic pastoralists present in Chad, Sudan, Cameroon, the CAR and the Congo. In 2009, a rumour spread that the Mbororo were collaborating with the LRA. Although this has not been corroborated, Kony did order his fighters not to abduct the herders' children. Kony could have decided not to antagonise the Mbororo either because their knowledge of the region makes them useful or because he sees them as a potential threat – they are often armed and are said to wield strong magic powers. Crisis Group interview, former LRA member, Bangui, CAR, 13 March 2010. See also Steven Spittaels and Filip Hilgert, "Mapping Conflict Mo-

Some groups, who may not even know whether Kony is alive, use the tactics they have learned – pillaging and abducting villagers to act as porters or disposable fighters – as a survival mechanism. This has become a motivation in itself for continuing to use the LRA's modus operandi. If the LRA were to disintegrate further and even if the army killed or captured Kony, there is a serious risk that isolated groups of fighters would continue to make civilians suffer across the region.

The army can rightly claim to have the LRA on the run. Its operation has disorganised and therefore weakened the LRA as a guerrilla group. But in terms of the suffering it causes, that hardly matters. As long as small groups survive in frontier zones where national armies are too weak to provide security, they will continue to pose a serious threat to the civilian population.

C. CIVILIAN SUFFERING AND SELF-DEFENCE

The egregious civilian suffering that has continued throughout 2009 and 2010 in the Congo, South Sudan and the CAR rubbishes any claim of overall success for Operation Lightning Thunder. For every LRA fighter the Ugandan army has killed or captured, more than four civilians have been killed in fighting related to the conflict.¹⁰⁷ Following the 2008 Christmas massacres and the widespread criticism they provoked, the army has made greater efforts to protect civilians in areas where it operates, but its troops are too few to deploy in all vulnerable villages. The security forces of South Sudan and the CAR have proved too weak and lacking in motivation to assist, while the abuses of the Congolese army have exacerbated the problems of villagers. The UN has found itself overwhelmed.¹⁰⁸ In re-

sponse, civilian self-defence groups have sprung up in all three countries. Their success has depended on the degree of government support and their martial spirit.

The LRA uses fear to control civilians. The violence of its attacks and the suffering it causes are intended to frighten villagers into not giving its pursuers the information they need to wage a counter-insurgency campaign and to frighten civilians away so they can move with less risk of being spotted.¹⁰⁹ In all three countries, the number of civilians killed continues to grow.¹¹⁰ It seemed like the practice of mutilating victims had ended, until nearly 30 fighters attacked Bangadi, Haut-Uélé district, Congo, in early November 2009, killing some and cutting the lips and ears off others.¹¹¹

Thanks to the hysteria these terror tactics cause, the LRA's impact is disproportionate to its numbers. Small groups have displaced thousands. In the Congo in 2009 alone, some 365,000 people fled their homes to the relative safety of larger towns, while others fled across the border.¹¹² There are now some 22,000 Congolese refugees in the CAR and about 12,400 in South Sudan.¹¹³ In the CAR, villagers all along the Mbomou River have sought out larger towns for safety: there are more than 8,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Obo, about 600 in Mboki, just over 500 in Bangassou and a small number in

temporary operating bases (TOBs) in Bangadi, Ngilima and Niangara, each comprising about 30 soldiers with patrol vehicles. There were also two small teams of military observers, one based in Faradje and one in Dungu. The Senegalese component is leaving the COB at Dingila, Bas-Uélé district, in April 2010 in the first phase of MONUC's drawdown. Moroccan troops from Ituri will replace them but this may become a smaller TOB. Crisis Group email correspondence, MONUC officer, Goma, 5 April 2010.

¹⁰⁹ For a fuller analysis of the LRA's brutal tactics, see Kasper Thams Olsen, "Violence against Civilians in Civil War: Understanding Atrocities by the Lord's Resistance Army in Northern Uganda", Conflict Research Group, working paper no. 8, February 2007.

¹¹⁰ Based on figures from Human Rights Watch, OCHA and press reports, Crisis Group estimates that between December 2008 and early April 2010, the LRA killed at least 1,400 people in the Congo, 91 in South Sudan and 57 in the CAR. Given the lack of organised monitoring and poor communication networks in the frontier region, many deaths have likely gone unreported. The real total could, therefore, be a great deal higher.

¹¹¹ These fighters appeared to be new to the area, as they were asking directions. An injection of fighters from elsewhere may explain the change in behaviour. Crisis Group interview, NGO officer, Dungu, Congo, 16 February 2010.

¹¹² "Phénomène LRA: 849 morts en 2009, 1486 enlèvements, et à ce jour, 365 000 déplacés", Radio Okapi, 2 December 2009.

¹¹³ Crisis Group email correspondence, OCHA, Bangui, CAR, 27 March 2010. "South Sudan weekly refugees statistics, 4-10 April 2010", UNHCR.

tives: Province Orientale (DRC)", International Peace Information Service (IPIS), 17 March 2010.

¹⁰⁷ This ratio is calculated using the Ugandan army's own figures of LRA fighters killed and captured and Crisis Group's conservative estimate of civilians killed based on Human Rights Watch reporting, OCHA statistics and press reports. This conservative estimate is still significantly higher than in recent conflicts. Research carried out for the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia estimated that in the 1992-1995 Bosnian war, the ratio of civilians killed by both sides to military killed on both sides was 1.17. See "Death toll in Bosnian war was 102,000", Norwegian News Agency, 14 November 2004. In Afghanistan in 2007, the ratio of all civilians killed to Taliban killed by the international forces and Afghan army and police was around 0.36. See "Afghanistan: Civilian Deaths from Air Strikes", Human Rights Watch press release, 8 September 2008 and "Record 151 U.S. troops die in Afghanistan in 2008", Associated Press, 31 December 2008.

¹⁰⁸ In early April 2010, MONUC's base of operations in Dungu town comprised about 200 soldiers. There were also four company operating bases (COBs) in Faradje, Duru, Dingila and at the airport in Dungu with around 100 men in each and three

Zemio.¹¹⁴ The short-term humanitarian emergency is clear, and with farmers not returning to their fields to harvest their crops, there is a growing risk of food shortages.

Congolese civilians in Haut- and Bas-Uélé districts are doubly unfortunate. The national army kills, rapes and extorts money from them on a regular basis.¹¹⁵ The situation worsened in late 2009, when the more disciplined troops of the Republican Guard were withdrawn and replaced with former rebels, many from the Kivus in the eastern Congo, who had recently been integrated into the army.¹¹⁶ Besides abusing civilians, the army, high-ranking officers included, is allegedly involved in the illegal trade of food rations, fuel, guns, ammunitions, timber and ivory. MONUC provides enough food for 6,000 soldiers, but their commanders sell it in local markets, so the number of rations may be inflated to generate more profit. MONUC cut the army's fuel ration in half when it came to light it was also selling this.¹¹⁷

The Congolese army's failure to adequately respond to intensified LRA attacks in September 2008 triggered the formation of self-defence groups. At first the Congolese government recognised their legitimacy, as they were closely linked to traditional Zande authorities, welcomed their success in fending off the LRA and provided funds.¹¹⁸ They worked because the local youth knew the areas they were patrolling, were on site to react immediately to an attack and were committed to defending their communities.

However, after several groups clashed with police, taking their weapons, the government increasingly lost tolerance and trust. In mid-2009, fearing the creation of a Zande rebel group potentially stronger than the army, it pressured

traditional chiefs to disband the self-defence groups.¹¹⁹ Since then, frustration at the lack of protection has mounted and focused on MONUC.¹²⁰ On 25 January 2010, a 300-strong protest march turned into a riot outside the peacekeepers' base in Dungu.¹²¹ While MONUC is mandated to support the army in protecting civilians, its almost 1,000 Moroccans deployed in Oriental province have neither the necessary numbers nor the intelligence gathering capacity.

When LRA attacks increased in Western Equatoria State in late 2008, South Sudanese community self-defence groups emerged spontaneously and adopted the name originally used by similar groups in northern Uganda – Arrow Boys. Some have basic hunting rifles, others only machetes and bows and arrows but they have proved very effective. They patrol at night, warn communities about LRA tricks to enter villages unchallenged and when attackers are discovered, use mobile phones to mobilise quickly.¹²² The church and government endorse their work. Local authorities have even encouraged them to aggressively seek out the LRA but deny arming them.¹²³ So far the close collaboration of the Arrow Boys with traditional leaders, local authorities and the SPLA has allowed the state to monitor and to some extent control their activities. However, the vigilante groups do not hesitate to kill suspected LRA members they find.¹²⁴ Local authorities need to ensure such mob justice does not become the norm.

Experience of recent conflict seems to have made the Zande communities in both the Congo and South Sudan quick to take up arms against the LRA. By contrast, the Zande in south-eastern CAR, who have enjoyed relative peace in recent years, have been slower to respond. The Fulani tradesmen in Mboki, Haut-Mbomou prefecture, who

¹¹⁴ Crisis Group email correspondence, humanitarian official, Bangui, 13 April 2010.

¹¹⁵ The Congolese army contingent based at Doruma, Haut-Uélé district, is an exception to this rule. The commander in charge maintains discipline among his soldiers, takes civilian protection seriously and communicates well with local authorities and international NGOs. Crisis Group interview, international NGO worker, Bunia, Congo, 18 February 2010.

¹¹⁶ Many are thought to be former members of the Kivu-based National Congress for the Defence of the People (Congres national pour la défense du peuple, CNDP) militia group. Crisis Group interviews, OCHA officer, Dungu, Congo, 16 February 2010; MONUC officer, Goma, Congo, 19 February 2010.

¹¹⁷ Crisis Group interviews, MONUC officials, Dungu and Goma, Congo, February 2010. For more on the Congolese army's criminal activities and abuses against civilians, see Ledio Cakaj, "Between a Rock and a Hard Place: LRA Attacks and Congolese Army Abuses in Northeastern Congo", Enough Project, March 2010.

¹¹⁸ See "How Enlightening is the Thunder? Study on the Lord's Resistance Army in the border region of DR Congo, Sudan and Uganda", IKV Pax Christi, February 2009, pp. 16-19.

¹¹⁹ Spittaels and Hilgert, "Mapping Conflict Motives", op. cit. In the process, the Congolese army killed the leader of the strongest self-defence group, that of Bangadi. Crisis Group interview, MONUC officer, Dungu, Congo, 16 February 2010.

¹²⁰ MONUC suspects the Congolese army of stoking rumours that peacekeepers were working in collusion with LRA elements. The army would welcome MONUC's departure, which would allow it a freer rein to pursue illegal activities. Crisis Group interviews, MONUC officers, Dungu, Congo, 16 and 17 February 2010.

¹²¹ "Conférence de presse", MONUC, 27 January 2010. A much bigger riot took place in September 2008. "Angry protesters attack UN post, wound two peacekeepers in DR Congo", UN News, 26 September 2008.

¹²² "Field dispatch: The Arrow Boys of Southern Sudan – an army of the willing", Enough Project, 11 March 2010.

¹²³ "Arrow boys hit back at LRA", Institute of War and Peace Reporting, 2 March 2009.

¹²⁴ "WES Arrow Boys take the lead in LRA fighting", *Sudan Tribune*, 17 December 2009.

are used to protecting their herds, are leading the way.¹²⁵ In July 2009, they killed three LRA fighters and on 21 March 2010 were quick to repulse another attack.¹²⁶ In February 2010, inhabitants of Nzako, Mbomou prefecture, threw stones to repel the LRA. The same month, the day after an LRA attack, the inhabitants of Rafai went into the forest to track them down.¹²⁷ The CAR government has made small gestures of support,¹²⁸ but with a host of armed groups already active on its territory is wary of allowing more to form.

III. A NEW PROTECTION-BASED STRATEGY

The grave risk to civilians that any military campaign entails, especially one against a guerrilla force such as the LRA, makes negotiations the preferable option for ending conflict. In the case of the LRA, however, both sides' lack of genuine commitment to the Juba process and the further breakdown in trust since military operations resumed make it highly unlikely that further talks can end the nightmare. The LRA's killings and abductions in the three countries during the talks, as well as the murder in October 2007 of Vincent Otti, the senior commander who appeared most in favour of a peaceful solution, argue that Kony was never genuinely committed to the process. Museveni has made it clear that the Ugandan government will not re-open negotiations,¹²⁹ and his March 2010 oath that Kony will hang in Kampala despite the ICC arrest warrant makes it all the more likely that the LRA leader will fight to the death.¹³⁰ Despite Uganda's several previous failures to crush the LRA by force, there is now no feasible alternative to combining military pressure with the necessary incentives to encourage voluntary disarmament.

The army's strategy – one shared and supported by the U.S. – is to kill or catch Kony and, ideally, his high command, thereby hastening the movement's disintegration. It is based on the belief that the LRA "lives and dies with Kony".¹³¹ However, given the resilience and relative autonomy of isolated groups of fighters, removing Kony is unlikely to end the LRA threat. Without him, scattered bands of fighters may continue to use the LRA's brutal methods to survive. If they fear punishment in their home areas, they may look for profitable ways to continue living in the bush, becoming in effect bandits or mercenaries. Either way, they would still be a danger to civilians.

To permanently eliminate the LRA threat, the U.S., the Ugandan army and all regional actors must change the way they see the problem and adopt a new strategy. The problem is not just Kony, but rather a quasi-leaderless, causeless guerrilla group that is exploiting the weakness of three Central African states. The appropriate strategy is one which aims to eliminate both the threat and the circumstances that have allowed it flourish. The U.S. and the Ugandan army see themselves as waging a counterinsurgency campaign, distinct from the UN's engagement in peacekeeping and peacebuilding activities aimed at giv-

¹²⁵ The Fulani (also called Peuhl or Fulbe) are an ethnic group of Muslim background who originate in West Africa and are traditionally pastoralists. Many Fulani have come to the CAR from Chad. Some have maintained a nomadic way of life, while others have settled down and become tradesmen.

¹²⁶ "HDPT News bulletin 118, 20-27 July 2009", Humanitarian and Development Partnership Team (HDPT), 31 July 2009. Crisis Group telephone interview with NGO representative, Bangui, CAR, 26 March 2010.

¹²⁷ Crisis Group interviews, military officials and NGO workers, Bangui, March 2010.

¹²⁸ The CAR government has distributed small quantities of ammunition to be used in hunting rifles. Crisis Group interviews, military official, Bangui, CAR, 7 March 2010; former mayor of Obo, Bangui, CAR, 17 March 2010.

¹²⁹ "No new peace talks with [LRA] – Museveni", *The Daily Monitor*, 1 July 2009.

¹³⁰ "LRA leader Kony 'will be hanged in Uganda', says Museveni", *Afrik.com*, 12 March 2010.

¹³¹ Crisis Group interview, Ugandan officer, Sam Ouandja, CAR, 9 March 2010.

ing national authorities the chance to build state institutions. But because the LRA and state weakness are two sides of the same coin, all these actors should realise they share the same goal and that to achieve it they need to work together.

The Ugandan army, with the full support of the U.S., the Congo, South Sudan and CAR militaries, MONUC and UNMIS should adopt a joint strategy that focuses on the common ground between counterinsurgency, peacekeeping and institution building.¹³² Uganda and the U.S. should see that getting rid of Kony may win them praise and be politically valuable, but removing the LRA requires going further. They should prepare now to continue operations after Kony is caught or killed. However, the operation should no longer continue in this open-ended manner yielding an unacceptably high cost in civilian life. The Ugandan and U.S. governments need to fix a clear goal and timeline for its accomplishment. They should also review the operation every four months to assess civilian casualties and increase civilian protection measures accordingly.

A. THE STRATEGY

The Ugandan army's current strategy seeks to disrupt the LRA's command structure and erode its forces by tracking down and neutralising each of the groups by force and by inducing members to surrender. Greater emphasis should be put on the latter. The number of core Acholi fighters is shrinking compared to Congolese, Sudanese and Central African rank and file, the majority of whom have been abducted and forced to fight. It is likely that a growing proportion of combatants would rather return home than struggle to survive in the forest. The allied militaries and the UN should exploit these lines of fragility within the LRA.

To be more effective in both activities, the Ugandan army and its several partners should now prioritise three principles:

- ❑ protecting civilians;
- ❑ ensuring unity of effort among regional actors and between civilian and military actors; and
- ❑ promoting national ownership.

Protecting civilians is both a moral imperative and a tactical necessity. Civil society groups, local NGOs and international human rights groups are increasingly drawing attention to the unacceptable human cost of Operation

Lightning Thunder.¹³³ While there are international legal obligations to protect civilians, all actors, including the Ugandan army, should recognise that in a counterinsurgency protecting civilians is also tactically paramount. The LRA survives by pillaging villages for food, clothes and communications equipment and abducting civilians, some of whom become recruits. Civilians are also the best source of intelligence on LRA movements and strength.

A troop increase would help the Ugandans and the other armies combat the LRA, as it would allow them to be in more places at once. However, those armies already far outnumber the LRA, whose geographic spread, high mobility and avoidance of open combat make reliable intelligence much more important than superior numbers or firepower. The LRA's reluctance to communicate by telephone makes electronic intercepts less useful, and because its fighters hide in the forest, aerial surveillance is nearly useless. Human intelligence is, therefore, the primary resource for tracking them down.

In order to access it, the armies and the UN need to protect civilians, thereby earning their trust, and enhance two-way communication. They should also work with and empower community self-defence groups, so at the least, these can warn the professional militaries quickly enough to ensure a prompt and effective response. Civilians can also promote defections by assisting in the dissemination of "come home" messages to LRA combatants, but they will only be willing and able to do so if their security is guaranteed.

The LRA has become a regional problem that, due to the weakness of the state security forces and its reliance on civilians for its continued existence, cannot be solved by military means alone. The affected regional countries and the wider international community need to mobilise both military and civilian means to react in a fully coordinated manner. To protect civilians and more quickly track down the LRA, they must work more closely with civilian organisations and enhance information exchanges between each other. To better encourage defections, a coordinated communication campaign that makes greater use of civilian networks is needed to ensure that the same message reaches all LRA fighters.

¹³² For more on the overlap between counterinsurgency and peacekeeping strategies, see Karsten Friis, "Peacekeeping and counter-insurgency – two of a kind?", *International Peacekeeping*, vol. 17, no. 1, 2010.

¹³³ Civil society in north-eastern Congo has been very vocal in its demand for better protection. See "Trail of Death", op. cit., p. 63 and annex. In 2009 inhabitants of Obo, Haut-Mbomou prefecture, CAR, created The Association of Residents for the Development of Haut-Mbomou (Association des ressortissants pour le développement du Haut-Mbomou, ASSOREDEHMBO). Like its Congolese counterparts, it has been writing letters to the government expressing its frustration. "Centrafrique: Plus de 200 morts dans des violences perpétrées par la LRA depuis 2008", *Centrafrique-Presse*, 3 April 2010.

Finally, national actors should recognise that if the Ugandan army kills or captures Kony, Kampala is likely to call off the hunt for the remainder of his forces. MONUC and UNMIS are also only temporary. It is essential, therefore, that each country takes ownership of the fight against the LRA at both the political and military level. Given the deficiencies in political will and military capacity in the Congo, South Sudan and the CAR and the time it takes to strengthen national institutions, communities need to put local structures in place quickly to support their security forces and be better prepared to combat the LRA. While the Ugandans and the UN are on the ground, they should help strengthen both local and national institutions and seek to foster local and national ownership of the problem.

B. TRANSLATING WILL INTO REGIONAL ACTION

The fight against the LRA aligns with the interests of some actors in the region more than others. However, there is growing recognition both regionally and more widely that the LRA is a serious problem that is not going away and growing political will to do something more about it. If those actors, both regionally and beyond, who are more committed to the hunt pressure the others to play their part, a solution is possible.

In the past, credible accusations were levelled at Museveni and the Ugandan army that they were dragging out the LRA conflict to profit from resources in South Sudan and military aid.¹³⁴ Museveni was also in no hurry to finish off the LRA, because the fighting drew attention away from his failure to maintain democratic standards and address the economic and political marginalisation of the north. But with Uganda's general elections coming up in February 2011 and the U.S., one of its most generous donors, fully behind the current military operation, Museveni's professed determination to finally end the LRA story is probably genuine.¹³⁵ However, because the LRA no longer poses a direct threat to Ugandan interests, there is a risk

that he will be satisfied with capturing or killing Kony. The U.S. should press Uganda to maintain the effort to neutralise the LRA threat as a whole even after Kony is removed.

On the 50th anniversary of Congolese independence on 30 June 2010, Kabila would like to demonstrate that the country can stand on its own. The government denies the reality of the LRA threat, arguing there is no more need for Ugandan troops or UN peacekeepers. However, growing worldwide and national attention to the high rate of civilian casualties is embarrassing for the government and obliges it to take responsibility. Just as strong U.S. pressure helped motivate Kabila to participate in Operation Lightning Thunder, Washington should now push him to better protect his own citizens.

For South Sudan, the LRA is a peripheral issue compared to the January 2011 self-determination referendum. However, it rose on the political agenda amid speculation that Khartoum might use the LRA once again in order to destabilise South Sudan during the April 2010 national elections.¹³⁶ While this did not happen, it is not impossible in the future, and the threat means Salva Kiir should take the LRA seriously. Popular frustration with LRA abuses has even led Bashir to announce his determination to rid Sudan of the scourge.¹³⁷ He should give tangible evidence by authorising the joint UN/African Union mission (UNAMID) to carry out a fact-finding mission into the reported LRA presence in southern Darfur.

In the CAR, Bozizé is focused on winning presidential and legislative elections currently planned for May and June 2010, and LRA fighters in the east pose no threat to his power base in Bangui. With its weak army overstretched by rebel groups across the north, the government's will and capacity to react to the LRA is negligible. However, one rebel group has already criticised its failure to stop the LRA.¹³⁸ As the LRA becomes more of a domestic political issue, and international attention on civilian casualties in the CAR grows, the president will be obliged to take a stronger stance.

Like the national governments, most of the international community is largely focused on core political issues in each of the affected countries, so has been slow to stress the importance of the fight against the LRA.¹³⁹ The U.S., however, is heavily invested in the fight to stop Kony. In

¹³⁴ See Mareike Schomerus, "The Lord's Resistance Army in Sudan: A History and Overview", Small Arms Survey, September 2007; and Clement Ochan, "Assessing Uganda's cross-border pursuit of the Lord's Resistance Army", Feinstein International Center, February 2009. The Ugandan army is more professional than five years ago thanks largely to U.S. training; there have been no reports it is engaged in illicit enterprises in Sudan, the Congo or the CAR.

¹³⁵ The February 2011 presidential and legislative elections, in which Museveni may face strong challenges, dominate the government's agenda. Although killing or capturing Kony would not alter the North's strong opposition, it might give him a boost in other constituencies. Regardless of the election context, victory over the LRA after so many years of conflict would improve Museveni's standing regionally and internationally.

¹³⁶ "LRA plans attacks in South Sudan to disrupt elections", *Sudan Tribune*, 17 March 2010.

¹³⁷ "Sudan's Al Bashir vows to end LRA attacks in South", *Sudan Tribune*, 3 March 2010.

¹³⁸ "La CPJP décidée à combattre les 'Tongo Tongo'", *Le Confident*, 6 April 2010.

¹³⁹ Crisis Group interviews, diplomats and international expert, Kampala, February 2010; diplomats, Bangui, CAR, March 2010.

February 2010, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton stated: “I have been following the Lord’s Resistance Army for more than fifteen years. I just don’t understand why we cannot end this scourge. And we’re going to do everything we can to provide support we believe will enable us to do that”.¹⁴⁰

President Obama inherited his predecessor’s patronage of Operation Lightning Thunder, but finishing off the LRA aligns with his Africa policy, as the group is still on the U.S. list of terrorist organisations. Stabilising Somalia, which the U.S. sees as fertile ground for terrorist cells, is a greater priority; however, a quick resolution to the LRA problem could free thousands more Ugandan troops to join the four battalions (about 3,400 soldiers) Kampala has already deployed in the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM).¹⁴¹

On 11 March 2010, the U.S. Senate urged the Obama administration to greater efforts against the LRA by passing the Lord’s Resistance Army Disarmament and Northern Uganda Recovery Act. If the bill becomes law, the president will have to submit to Congress within 180 days a regional strategy to protect civilians, “apprehend or otherwise remove Kony and his top commanders from the battlefield, and to disarm and demobilise Lord’s Resistance Army fighters”. The bill stipulates that the strategy should also include more support to “comprehensive reconstruction, transitional justice, and reconciliation efforts” in northern Uganda.¹⁴² This emphasis on civilian protection and Uganda’s long-term recovery is welcome. The House of Representatives should pass the bill so it can become law, and the Obama administration should step up to this call for leadership among the international community.

Other international actors, the UK, France and the European Union in particular, should also play their part by putting diplomatic pressure on Uganda, the Congo, the CAR and Sudan – the South and the Khartoum government alike – to take firmer action in response to the LRA threat.

C. PUTTING PRINCIPLES INTO PRACTICE

1. Enhance civilian protection for a more effective operation

National authorities, the Ugandan army and the UN should use a variety of measures to better protect civilians at the same time as they step up their fight against the LRA. These include supporting and creating community security structures; boosting troop presence and resources; increasing human rights monitoring; and enhancing information collection and analysis.

Experience has shown that those best placed to protect civilians are civilians themselves.¹⁴³ They are highly motivated, know the territory and are on site to react immediately. Local and national authorities should not arm civilian groups but instead quickly provide them with organisational support and resources to help them mitigate the LRA threat. As civilians run a serious risk of provoking reprisal attacks by openly organising into self-defence groups, participation should be strictly voluntary.

To reduce the risk that self-defence groups transform into militias, it is essential that local authorities take control of them. They should register all members, agree in writing on their specific tasks, instruct them on remaining within the law and plan and monitor activities carefully. They should also emphasise that these are temporary arrangements and prepare for the groups’ dissolution when the LRA threat no longer exists. The more state institutions – local officials, police, gendarmerie, army – organise and work alongside self-defence groups, the less likely they are to separate and become antagonistic to rather than an extension of state authority.

Part of the job of self-defence groups should be enhancing communication in their area so they can provide early warning of LRA activity to neighbouring villages and inform others of the tactics fighters use to gain access to villages unchallenged.¹⁴⁴ Even in places covered by mo-

¹⁴⁰ Clinton was speaking at a hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 24 February 2010.

¹⁴¹ Uganda’s contribution makes up just over half of AMISOM’s 6,300 troops; the rest are Burundians. Crisis Group telephone interview, African Union official, Nairobi, 15 April 2010.

¹⁴² The bill, if passed, would also authorise the government to appropriate \$10 million in fiscal year 2010 to spend on humanitarian assistance for civilians in north-eastern Congo, southern Sudan and the CAR and the same amount for each fiscal year 2010-2012 to assist reconciliation and transitional justice in northern Uganda. “The Lord’s Resistance Army Disarmament and Northern Uganda Recovery Act”, S. 1067, U.S. Senate, 19 May 2009.

¹⁴³ Self-defence groups in Uganda were particularly effective in the north. See Sandrine Perrot, “‘Who’s the Bull in the Kraal?’ Guerre et mémoires et guerres de mémoire dans l’Est de l’Ouganda”, in Marie-Aude Fouéré (dir.), *Les Cahiers d’Etudes Africaines*, Numéro spécial sur Mémoires et politiques, March 2010.

¹⁴⁴ To enter a village before starting their attack, LRA fighters sometimes pretend to surrender or, dressed in full military uniform and having shaved their heads, pretend to be Ugandan soldiers on patrol. At Nzako, Mbomou province, CAR and at Mabango ya Talo, Haut-Uélé district, Congo the LRA used a local resident as a spy to help prepare its attack. Crisis Group interviews, NGO workers, Bangui, March 2010; telephone interview, Catholic priest in Nzako, 15 March 2010. “Trail of Death”, op. cit.

mobile phone networks, governments and the UN should support the expansion and creation of community radio stations to allow greater information dissemination.

- ❑ In South Sudan, the SPLA and the governor and county commissioners of Western Equatoria State should continue to coordinate with and work alongside the Arrow Boys, encouraging them to pass any information concerning LRA activity to the SPLA, the Ugandan army and UNMIS. To deter Arrow Boys from using weapons for illegal purposes, state authorities should quickly prosecute any infractions.
- ❑ In the CAR, local authorities – the *prefets* and *sous-prefets* of Mbomou, Haut-Mbomou and Haute-Kotto prefectures – should learn from the experience of their counterparts in South Sudan and support nascent self-defence groups by organising them and providing the means to communicate LRA movements to the national and Ugandan armies.
- ❑ In the Congo, the government should work with the traditional Zande authorities to create community security committees in LRA-affected areas. Unlike the former self-defence groups, these should be unarmed, tasked with gathering information on LRA movements and provided with satellite phones to communicate this information to the national and Ugandan armies and MONUC. In Oriental province, the continued presence of Mai-Mai militia set a dangerous precedent, so it would be unwise to create armed self-defence groups.

Civilians do not have the means to repel the LRA on their own, so the armies of Uganda, the Congo, South Sudan and the CAR, as well as MONUC and UNMIS peacekeepers should take the following protection measures:

- ❑ Deploy more troops, means of transport and communications to LRA-affected areas. MONUC is in a delicate position because Kabila is insisting on its departure by mid-2011.¹⁴⁵ An increase in troops in Haut- and Bas-Uélé districts during an overall drawdown will be difficult. However, the anticipated renewal of the mission's mandate on 31 May 2010 is an opportunity for the Security Council to give the LRA-affected areas the resources they need. Whatever decision is taken about the drawdown of MONUC, the Security Council should make clear that this does not include the troops located in the LRA-affected areas.

The majority of the LRA is in the CAR, which in terms of regional institutional capacity, is a “black hole”.¹⁴⁶ The Chad government's demand that the UN mission (MINURCAT) that operates in eastern Chad and north-eastern CAR leave risks worsening this situation.¹⁴⁷ President Bozizé has made no public statement on whether he wants UN troops to stay in the CAR but so far has been open to foreign troops helping secure its territory.¹⁴⁸ The UN Security Council should give MINURCAT a new mandate to remain in the CAR, reinforce its units there with those leaving Chad and deploy to the south east to help protect civilians from the LRA.

- ❑ Increase joint patrols day and night in villages and on frequently used routes in areas where the LRA is suspected to operate. National armies should be involved as much as possible to gain more understanding of the threat, learn counterinsurgency tactics from the Ugandans and develop stronger ownership of the fight.
- ❑ Prioritise security in larger settlements to create a safe place for inhabitants of nearby villages to take refuge and for aid agencies to deliver food.
- ❑ Support and work more closely with community security committees in the Congo and self-defence groups in South Sudan and the CAR. It is particularly important that national armies build strong relationships with such entities in case the Ugandan army drops out once Kony is removed. In the Congo, the national army and MONUC should also work more closely with the rangers of Garamba National Park, who are familiar with the territory and have the expertise to track the LRA.
- ❑ Make assessments before each action of the likely LRA reaction and the impact on the nearby population and take appropriate protective measures.
- ❑ Communicate more frequently and exchange information with each other within and across borders to improve the collective ability to respond rapidly to LRA sightings and attacks.

¹⁴⁵ The 20,000-strong mission has planned a three-phase drawdown. The first phase will see the departure of 2,000 troops, includes the Senegalese contingent from Dingila, Bas-Uélé district, in April 2010; the second phase entails a greater reduction of troops from Haut-Uélé district by December. Crisis Group email correspondence, MONUC officer, Goma, Congo, 30 March 2010.

¹⁴⁶ Crisis Group interview, MONUC officer, Goma, Congo, 19 February 2010.

¹⁴⁷ Chadian President Déby agreed that MINURCAT's mandate, which ran out on 15 March 2010, could be extended to 15 May, while talks on the mission's future are conducted. “Talks to open on UN peacekeeping mission to Chad”, Agence France-Presse, 23 March 2010.

¹⁴⁸ In 2008, Bozizé warmly welcomed EUFOR, MINURCAT's European Union predecessor; the Mission for the Consolidation of Peace in the CAR (Mission de consolidation de la paix en Centrafrique, MICOPAX), a multi-country African force, provides security in the west of the country.

- ❑ Employ Zande translators in all three countries to facilitate information exchange between civilians and national and international forces.
- ❑ Repair and maintain roads in all three countries. The LRA tends to stay away from them, while better roads would allow the armies to respond quicker to attacks. MONUC should quickly finish repairing the Dungu-Faradje road and increase support to the International Organisation of Migration (IOM), which is repairing the route from Dungu to Doruma, through the zone where the LRA has been most active.¹⁴⁹

Monitoring and reporting human rights abuses is an important part of civilian protection, as it allows national and international actors to recognise and better understand the scale and nature of civilian suffering.

- ❑ The Congolese government should urgently enforce discipline within the regiments deployed in Haut- and Bas-Uélé, encourage civilian oversight structures to monitor human rights abuses by its soldiers and punish and withdraw offenders from the field.
- ❑ MONUC and UNMIS should deploy permanent joint protection teams to monitor human rights abuses committed by both the LRA and national armies.¹⁵⁰ MONUC should urgently reinforce its civil affairs team so as to better inform local communities about UN activities, listen to their concerns and ensure an appropriate response. This is essential to counter the society's frustration and feeling of abandonment and develop a fruitful working relationship with local communities.

Information gathering, analysis and dissemination are essential to better protection of civilians and improved offensive operations.

- ❑ The neutralisation of the LRA leadership within one year should be the clear goal and timeline of the operation.
- ❑ The U.S. should deploy a team to the theatre of operations to run an intelligence platform that centralises all information from the Ugandan and other armies, as well as the UN and civilian networks, and provides analysis to the Ugandans to better target their military operations.
- ❑ MONUC and UNMIS should create a regional team, with members in both the Congo and Sudan, dedicated to gathering, analysing and sharing information on LRA activities and advising on civilian protection. As

soon as MINURCAT deploys to south-eastern CAR, it should join this team.

2. Encourage defections, facilitate disarmament and reintegration

A strategy to encourage LRA combatants to surrender requires two principal elements: a disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) program that offers them a strong enough incentive to leave the bush and a comprehensive communication campaign that uses the most effective media to ensure the "come home" message reaches them.

- ❑ Through the World Bank's Transitional Demobilization and Reintegration Program (TDRP), willing donors should finance DDR programs in all three countries, as well as a regional communication campaign.
- ❑ A consistent, regional DDR program should be created to cover former LRA fighters and allow them to reintegrate into their home communities. This requires MONUC to improve its existing program in the Congo by working with local and international NGOs and UNMIS and UNDP to expand their existing programs in Sudan and the CAR respectively to include LRA combatants.
- ❑ MONUC and UNMIS should design and implement a regional communication campaign, working closely with the regional intelligence gathering and coordination team. They should ensure radio and printed messages are consistent across the three countries, explaining that Ugandan combatants not indicted by the ICC who surrender will receive amnesty and can choose either to join the Ugandan army or be helped to resettle in northern Uganda. They should further explain that LRA combatants of other nationalities will be helped to resettle in their own countries, and local and international NGOs will provide children with psycho-social care.
- ❑ MONUC and UNMIS should increase the number of messages on Radio Okapi and Miraya FM encouraging defections and support Bangui-based Radio Ndeke Luka to extend its coverage over LRA-affected areas in south-eastern CAR and broadcast the same messages. Whenever possible, well-known, high-ranking former LRA commanders should convey these messages personally to increase credibility.
- ❑ MONUC and UNMIS should assist security committees, self-defence groups, church networks and local NGOs to disseminate these messages through community radio stations, leaflets and their own additional resources.

¹⁴⁹ Crisis Group interview, IOM officer, Bunia, Congo, 18 February 2010.

¹⁵⁰ Joint protection teams should include political affairs, civil affairs and child protection officers and deploy to target areas for three to five days.

- ❑ National and local radio stations should broadcast messages in languages spoken by LRA combatants: Lwo (spoken by Acholi), Sango (the CAR's national language), Zande, Lingala, French, Arabic and English.

IV. GETTING TO THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM IN NORTHERN UGANDA

The Juba talks aimed primarily at ending the LRA conflict. In this they failed. However, the government and LRA delegations also drew up agreements that sought to address the political and economic grievances that lie at the root of the conflict and to heal the social wounds of northern Uganda by bringing justice to victims and reconciling former fighters with their home communities.¹⁵¹ Only by reducing northerners' perception that they are politically and economically marginalised can the Kampala government be sure that no new rebel group will follow in Kony's footsteps. That the LRA is itself a successor to Alice Lakwena's Holy Spirit Movement shows that defeating it militarily is no guarantee of an end to northern Uganda's insecurity.

Although the LRA has now become a regional threat and has in effect lost its original political motivation, its roots lie deep in Uganda's history. Milton Obote, the country's first president and a northerner, returned to power in 1980. When Museveni launched his rebellion the following year in the centre of the country, Obote found himself dependent on the army for his survival. This consisted largely of northerners, predominantly Acholi. When Museveni took power in 1986, his supporters began persecuting northerners and Acholi in particular for the abuses they committed during Obote's time. The coincidence of the Acholi people's ethno-political grievances with the rise of influential spirit mediums in their society in part lie behind the creation of the rebel movement in the late 1980s that Kony eventually called the Lord's Resistance Army.¹⁵²

Spirit mediums no longer have the ability to inspire and mobilise armed groups, but northerners, with good reason, still perceive themselves politically and economically marginalised by Museveni's government. As long as these perceptions persist, there is a risk that either LRA "sleepers" in northern Uganda will pick up arms again or new rebel groups will emerge.¹⁵³ To minimise this risk and

¹⁵¹ For a full analysis of the Juba accords and a more extensive discussion of what needs to be done in northern Uganda to prevent the recurrence of conflict, see Crisis Group Report, *Northern Uganda*, op. cit.

¹⁵² Tim Allen, *Trial Justice: The International Criminal Court and the Lord's Resistance Army* (New York, 2006), pp. 25-37. See also Heike Behrend, *Alice Lakwena and the Holy Spirits: War in Northern Uganda 1986-97* (Oxford, 1999).

¹⁵³ There is widespread suspicion that Kony still has some LRA members in northern Uganda as "sleepers", inactive now but ready to pick up arms again if he or they see fit. A former LRA member claimed a Ugandan NGO secretly supplied the LRA

bring closure to the war, the Ugandan government should implement the provisions of the Juba agreements that Kony did not sign but which relate to reconstructing the north, bringing the worst perpetrators to justice and foostering reconciliation at the local and national levels.

A. SOCIO-ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT OF THE NORTH

Since the LRA left northern Uganda, peace and considerable donor investment have spurred its economic growth. Gulu is booming. However, there remains a marked economic disparity between north and south.¹⁵⁴ Although some 85 per cent of those who either voluntarily moved to displaced persons camps or were forced to by the Ugandan army have returned home,¹⁵⁵ the state's shattered infrastructure cannot provide the necessary social services in return sites – clean water, healthcare and education in particular.¹⁵⁶ As the emergency subsided in 2007-2008 donors, the UN and international NGOs significantly cut humanitarian relief to the region but were slow to start more expensive projects aimed at social and economic recovery and long-term development.¹⁵⁷

The most vulnerable – widows, children and the elderly – who tend to remain in the camps are still dependent on humanitarian agencies for the means to survive. Meanwhile northern society is struggling to cope with a host of socio-economic problems left behind by the war. Land disputes are on the rise as returnees try to sell communal land to an influx of business opportunists.¹⁵⁸ Small scale agriculture has been slow to pick up as a new generation has yet to learn farming skills.¹⁵⁹ Dependency on hand-outs and exposure to Western influences in the camps have

contributed to the erosion of traditional values and a rise in alcoholism and domestic abuse.¹⁶⁰ Left unaddressed, such problems risk feeding perceptions of neglect among northern communities and antagonising the north-south relationship.

In the May 2007 Agreement on Comprehensive Solutions, the government pledged to make special efforts to reconstruct the north and facilitate the return of IDPs through a Peace, Recovery and Development Plan for Northern Uganda (PRDP).¹⁶¹ By September of that year the government had drawn up the three-year development framework. However, due to an apparent lack of political will, the government deferred full implementation for one year.¹⁶² It finally allocated its agreed share of the necessary funds in the 2009-2010 budget.¹⁶³ Since mid-2009, central government has been transferring PRDP funds on a quarterly basis to district councils to improve social services, but it has yet to publish an evaluation of the use of this money.¹⁶⁴

That the PRDP has finally begun is a good first step towards improving north-south relations, and northern politicians have expressed some satisfaction with the work so far.¹⁶⁵ But there are still major problems surrounding implementation that make it difficult for the PRDP to achieve its goal, namely improving northerners' living standards and rebuilding their trust in the government.

At the forefront of most Ugandans' minds are the presidential, legislative and local elections to be held in February 2011. Candidates and parties are looking for opportunities to use the distribution of development money to win political favour at the national, district and local levels. Influential figures in government already made sure during the drafting phase that the PRDP, initially intended to boost growth in eighteen war-affected northern districts, was expanded to cover 40 districts including some not

with ammunition when it was based in Garamba Park. Crisis Group interview, Bangui, CAR, 13 March 2010. Rumours have also circulated about new northern rebel groups. "Mbabazi – new rebel group real", *The Daily Monitor*, 10 July 2009.

¹⁵⁴ Uganda's national poverty rate is around 30 per cent, but in the north it is around 60 per cent. "Getting aid right in Northern Uganda – Interview with Julius Kiiza of Makerere University, Kampala", Center for Global Development, 1 March 2010.

¹⁵⁵ "Conflict and recovery briefing report no. 6, 1 October 2009-31 March 2010", Stability Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Uganda (SPRING), USAID project, April 2010, p. 13.

¹⁵⁶ A major problem is the reluctance of health workers and teachers to staff remote clinics and schools. Crisis Group telephone interview, UK Department for International Development (DFID) officer, Kampala, 20 April 2010. See also "Conflict and recovery briefing report no. 6", op. cit., p. 13.

¹⁵⁷ Crisis Group telephone interviews, donor representatives, 20 April 2010.

¹⁵⁸ Crisis Group interview, international NGO worker, Kampala, 24 February 2010.

¹⁵⁹ Crisis Group telephone interview, UK Department for International Development (DFID) officer, Kampala, 20 April 2010.

¹⁶⁰ For more on these and other socio-economic problems see "Conflict and recovery briefing report no. 6", op. cit.

¹⁶¹ The scope of the PRDP is larger than economic development alone. Its four main objectives are consolidating state authority; rebuilding and empowering communities; revitalising the economy; and peace building and reconciliation.

¹⁶² Crisis Group telephone interview, donor representative, Kampala, 20 April 2010.

¹⁶³ The total cost of implementing the plan is about \$600 million. In each of the three years, the government has agreed to fund 30 per cent. In the 2009-2010 budget, the government has set aside 100 billion Ugandan shillings (about \$50 million) for supporting development projects in the north. Crisis Group interviews, donors and northern members of parliament, Kampala, February 2010.

¹⁶⁴ Crisis Group telephone interviews, donor representatives, Kampala, 13 and 20 April 2010.

¹⁶⁵ Crisis Group interview, northern politicians, Kampala, February 2010. See also "Mao praises Museveni", *The Daily Monitor*, 14 April 2010.

touched by violence.¹⁶⁶ Spreading the funds thinner limits what can be achieved in the worst-hit areas and dilutes the initiative's political impact.

The political necessity to ensure beneficiaries see additional PRDP funding coming to their area means it has not been fully integrated into existing district development structures.¹⁶⁷ Separate planning and monitoring mechanisms increase implementation time and costs. Even at the sub-county and parish levels, personal and party political interests risk diverting development money away from where it is needed most.

Unresolved differences of opinion between foreign partners and the government on implementation strategy hamper coordination of all actors' efforts. To deflect accusations of foot-dragging, the government blames slow implementation on donors' failure to provide 70 per cent of the PRDP budget, to which donors say they never agreed.¹⁶⁸ Donors prefer to give off-budget support to programs that respond to priorities they themselves have identified which "correspond loosely" to the PRDP framework.¹⁶⁹ They lack confidence in state-run mechanisms for two main reasons. First, embezzlement by government officials at both national and district levels remains "a major challenge".¹⁷⁰ Secondly, they consider district coun-

cils too weak to design, implement and monitor development programs and account for funding.

The government's creation of many new districts under the banner of decentralisation is stretching scarce human resources and undermining service provision.¹⁷¹ UN agencies and international NGOs have encouraged government administrators to take leadership of development efforts, but some are still reluctant to share information and coordinate with ineffective state structures.¹⁷²

While drafting the PRDP, government was accused of failing to consult with intended beneficiaries enough to identify correctly needs at the grassroots level or even inform northern communities on what the PRDP would be for.¹⁷³ This situation has improved. There is now a relatively good understanding of the plan at district level, but communities have still not been sufficiently sensitised about how the PRDP works to be able to actively ensure that their needs are met.¹⁷⁴

If the government and donors are to respond effectively to the urgent need for basic services and set the north on the road to long-term socio-economic recovery, they need to address the following priorities:

- ❑ Donors should support humanitarian relief and long-term development programs through government channels, while maintaining strict conditions for transparency and accountability. The U.S. should enact and implement the LRA Disarmament and Northern Uganda Recovery Act, increasing its assistance if the Ugandan government "demonstrates a commitment to transparent and accountable reconstruction".¹⁷⁵ All donors should encourage the government to increase transparency by introducing measures such as random audits, mid-term reviews and parliamentary and civil society oversight.

¹⁶⁶ Crisis Group interview, northern member of parliament, Kampala, 23 February 2010 and Crisis Group telephone interview, donor representative, Kampala, 20 April 2010. Of the 22 additional districts, eleven were newly created in 2005-2006 and lie within the territory of the original eighteen. In terms of territory, the plan was expanded to cover two new districts in the north-central region and nine in the east. See Jonathan Marino, "Analyzing the implementation of Uganda's Peace, Recovery, and Development Plan (PRDP)", presentation at a public seminar held by Refugee Law Project, January 2009.

¹⁶⁷ Each district is supposed to plan and coordinate all development activities within a District Development Plan. Crisis Group telephone interview, donor representative, Kampala, 20 April 2010.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Crisis Group telephone interview, international development worker, Gulu, 20 April 2010. In December 2009 DFID launched a northern recovery support plan worth £100 million (about \$154 million) over five years. DFID used consultants to decide on the plan's six core components, which fall within the PRDP framework. However, for the first two years, much of this money will go directly to projects. Towards the end of 2011, DFID will review, based largely on the criteria of accountability, whether to give a larger proportion as direct budget support earmarked for northern development. Crisis Group telephone interview, UK Department for International Development (DFID) officer, Kampala, 20 April 2010.

¹⁷⁰ Crisis Group telephone interview, donor representative, Kampala, 20 April 2010. That at least twenty people were charged with corruption while implementing the World Bank-funded Northern Uganda Social Action Fund, now part of the PRDP,

set a discouraging precedent. "Is the PRDP Politics as Usual?", briefing note no. 2, Beyond Juba project, December 2008.

¹⁷¹ Crisis Group telephone interview, Refugee Law Project officer, Kampala, 22 April 2010. Northern communities complain that elected officials lack the necessary education and expertise while technical civil servants are not committed to their work because they are not accountable to the public. "Conflict and recovery briefing report no. 6", op. cit., p. 21. See also "Breeding Fragmentation? Issues in the Policy and Practice of Decentralisation in Uganda", Issue Paper no. 1, Beyond Juba project, June 2009.

¹⁷² Ellen Martin, "Capacity-building and partnership in Northern Uganda", *Humanitarian Exchange Magazine*, issue 46, March 2010.

¹⁷³ See Jonathan Marino, op. cit.

¹⁷⁴ Crisis Group telephone interviews, international and national development workers, 20 April 2010.

¹⁷⁵ "The Lord's Resistance Army Disarmament and Northern Uganda Recovery Act", op. cit., p. 10.

- ❑ The government and foreign partners should concentrate on building the capacity of local authorities to deliver services, thus increasing their ability to absorb more donor funding. Their involvement is crucial to fostering national ownership of the development process and building the confidence of northern communities in the state apparatus.
- ❑ The government should increase efforts to engage community level organisations in guiding implementation of the PRDP. This means boosting information dissemination activities and consultations.

The PRDP is a means for the government to improve the lives of northerners affected by the war and in that way contribute to reconciliation between the south and the north. However, it is insufficient to fully address the root causes of the conflict. It has been described as “a set of technical solutions to a gamut of political problems”.¹⁷⁶ To eradicate northerners’ perceptions that government policy is determined by regional bias, government needs to demonstrate impartiality in the selection of public officers and the allocation of state resources.

Museveni said recently: “The problem is that you [Acholi] have been voting unwisely in the previous elections. You must start to vote the party that wins, and you will see your sons and daughters in government”.¹⁷⁷ Greater northern participation in government should not be conditional on their support for the president’s party. Instead the government should promote equitable representation in all state institutions, the armed forces in particular. To speed up this process, it should, as agreed at Juba, establish an Equal Opportunities Commission to identify regional and ethnic disparities.

B. JUSTICE, ACCOUNTABILITY AND RECONCILIATION

The June 2007 Agreement on Accountability and Reconciliation and its February 2008 annex responded to the need for both retributive justice for those who committed the worst crimes, in particular Kony and his two remaining ICC-indicted commanders, and for restorative justice that could help heal community relationships. The government has made progress in laying the groundwork for the former but has done much less to ensure there are sufficient mechanisms to foster grassroots reconciliation. Its reluctance to invest in these is clear in the allotment of

only 2.7 per cent of the PRDP budget to the plan’s fourth strategic objective, peacebuilding and reconciliation.¹⁷⁸

Kony’s refusal to sign the peace agreement until the ICC arrest warrants were lifted motivated the creation of a Special Division of the High Court in Kampala capable of trying “individuals who are alleged to have committed serious crimes during the conflict” including those indicted by the ICC.¹⁷⁹ On 10 March 2010, the parliament passed the International Criminal Court Bill thereby incorporating the ICC’s Rome Statute and giving the Special Division jurisdiction over those indicted by that international court. Although this overcame the biggest hurdle for the Special Division, there is still some way to go in establishing its procedural rules and finding personnel. It is, therefore, still unsure whether it would meet the international standards necessary, so that the ICC would allow Kony, Odhiambo and Ongwen to stand trial in Kampala and not The Hague.¹⁸⁰

A great deal of attention has focused on the Special Division because of the ICC aspect, but even if it meets international legal norms, it would only try a very small fraction of LRA fighters.¹⁸¹ So far, close to 15,000 former LRA members have successfully applied for amnesty under the 2000 Amnesty Act, which has been continuously broadened and extended since its enactment.¹⁸² The Amnesty Commission has provided each with a reintegration package, but responsibility for social and economic reintegration into home communities falls on a seemingly ad hoc basis to NGOs or communities themselves.

¹⁷⁸ See “Peace, Recovery and Development Plan for Northern Uganda”, Government of Uganda, September 2007, p. 115.

¹⁷⁹ “Agreement on Accountability and Reconciliation”, 19 February 2008, annex, Article 7. The court is to have its own investigation unit to “identify individuals who are alleged to have planned or carried out widespread, systematic, or serious attacks directed against civilians ... and who shall be prosecuted as well as those who are alleged to have committed grave breaches of the Geneva conventions”. Ibid, Article 13.

¹⁸⁰ The first case will be that of Col. Thomas Kwoyelo, captured in the Congo in February 2009. The government and the Amnesty Commission have not made it clear why he alone has not been granted amnesty. The Commission told Crisis Group in February 2010 that Kwoyelo never applied for amnesty and was to be tried for crimes committed before he joined the rebellion and not covered by the amnesty law. However, it told Human Rights Watch in March 2010 that he had applied for amnesty but a decision had yet to be made. Crisis Group interview, Amnesty Commission officer, Kampala, 23 February 2010. “Trail of Death”, op. cit., p. 49.

¹⁸¹ At a Workshop in May 2008, the lead facilitator explained that the Special Division would try less than twenty of the top LRA commanders. “Workshop on Accountability and Reconciliation in Uganda, Workshop Report”, May 2008, p. 18.

¹⁸² Crisis Group interview, Amnesty Commission officer, Kampala, 23 February 2010.

¹⁷⁶ Dr Chris Dolan, director of the Refugee Law Project, Makerere University, “Is the PRDP a Three-Legged Table?”, speech to an NGO seminar, Kampala, 10 April 2008.

¹⁷⁷ “Mao praises Museveni”, *The Daily Monitor*, 14 April 2010.

The principle of amnesty for rank-and-file fighters has won support among northern communities principally because the majority of LRA combatants were forced to join against their will. Furthermore, war-weary communities say their desire for peace is greater than their need to see perpetrators punished: a 2007 survey asked what northern Ugandans prioritised, allowing them to give more than one answer; 44 per cent said peace, only 3 per cent justice.¹⁸³ However, on its own amnesty is not enough to heal the social wounds of the war. Some communities cannot stomach former LRA fighters living in their midst, and some former fighters refuse to go home for fear of retribution.¹⁸⁴ Some young mothers who have given birth to the babies of LRA fighters stay in IDP camps because their families reject the children.¹⁸⁵

Amnesty has been applied in Uganda in a top-down manner. While it may clear former LRA in the eyes of the state, it has lacked the participation of communities necessary to facilitate forgiveness at the grassroots level, where it matters most. Traditional justice mechanisms that involve and take place in the heart of communities can to some extent fill this gap. The Acholi *Mato Oput* ceremony is primarily used after a killing to reconcile the clan of the murderer with that of the victim. Following mediation, the perpetrator publicly admits responsibility for his crime, asks for forgiveness and pays compensation for the death of his victim.¹⁸⁶ However, such ceremonies are not well-suited for dealing with the sort of crimes committed by the LRA. Often fighters have killed tens or even hundreds of civilians from different clans, and the identity of killers and victims may be unknown.¹⁸⁷ After such mass crimes it is difficult to calculate the appropriate compensation, and it is unlikely that former LRA combatants from the bush would have the means to pay.

By relying on such traditional reconciliation ceremonies, it will be difficult to create a systematic regional reconciliation process, both because they require the voluntary participation of former fighters and because communities organise them on an ad hoc, case-by-case basis. Furthermore, times are changing in northern Uganda. A new generation, whose lives have been disrupted by decades of war, is losing knowledge of and respect for traditional practices and even values. This and greater exposure to Western cultural influences may be why many northerners now call for complementary mechanisms such as trials and truth commissions. Traditional justice mechanisms also are insufficient because they only aim to reconcile individuals and clans, and the war left tensions between whole tribes. Some in tribes such as the Langi and the Teso resent the Acholi, whom they see as the origin of their suffering.¹⁸⁸

These localised reconciliation mechanisms do not address the need for reconciliation at the national level. Throughout the conflict, the government has portrayed the LRA issue as an internal Acholi problem. But the army's oppression and abuse of northerners during the war exacerbated their pre-existing distrust of the Ugandan state.

The inability of traditional justice mechanisms to guarantee systematic reconciliation at the community, tribal and national levels means the government must do more. In the Juba accords, it agreed to set up a body that would analyse the history of the conflict and provide opportunities for individuals on both sides – LRA and army – to admit responsibility and apologise for their crimes.¹⁸⁹ The government has dragged its feet on this.¹⁹⁰ With presidential and legislative elections planned for February 2011, it is unwilling to expose atrocities soldiers committed during the conflict. However, such a body is essential to incorporate community-level reconciliation efforts into a national reconciliation project.

To enhance the current mechanisms for accountability and reconciliation, parliament should amend the amnesty law so that those suspected of having committed the most serious crimes are no longer eligible but will instead have to stand trial in the High Court. The government should also organise consultations with northern communities on

¹⁸³ "When the War Ends: A Population-Based Survey on Attitudes about Peace, Justice, and Social Reconstruction in Northern Uganda", The International Center for Transitional Justice and the Human Rights Center, University of California, December 2007.

¹⁸⁴ Crisis Group interviews, Western diplomat and NGO workers, Kampala, February 2010.

¹⁸⁵ Crisis Group interview, northern member of parliament, Kampala, 23 February 2010.

¹⁸⁶ Other northern tribes have their own reconciliation rituals. See Lino Owor Ogora, "Moving Forward: Traditional Justice and Victim Participation in Northern Uganda", Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, 2009, p. 1.

¹⁸⁷ As a result, some communities have adapted a different ritual to reintegrate LRA combatants. *Nyono Tong Gweno* (stepping on eggs) signifies "acceptance back into the community after a period of absence, particularly when the person has done something immoral or amoral". However, this lacks the truth-telling and compensation elements of *Mato Oput* that are key ingredients for genuine forgiveness. Tim Allen, op. cit., p. 166.

¹⁸⁸ Crisis Group telephone conversation, international expert, Kampala, 13 April 2010.

¹⁸⁹ "Agreement on Accountability and Reconciliation", 19 February 2008, annex, Article 4.

¹⁹⁰ The Refugee Law Project at Makerere University in Kampala has carried out over a year of consultations and drafted a National Reconciliation Act which provides for the creation of a National Reconciliation Forum. It has submitted the draft to government but parliament is unlikely to consider the draft before the 2011 elections. Crisis Group telephone interview, Refugee Law Project officer, Kampala, 22 April 2010.

the composition and planned activities of an independent National Reconciliation Forum with the capacity to coordinate truth-telling and reconciliation activities at community, tribal and national levels. Although the timing for such a body is not optimal in light of the ongoing conflict with the LRA, there would be value in launching formal consultations on its eventual mandate.

V. CONCLUSION

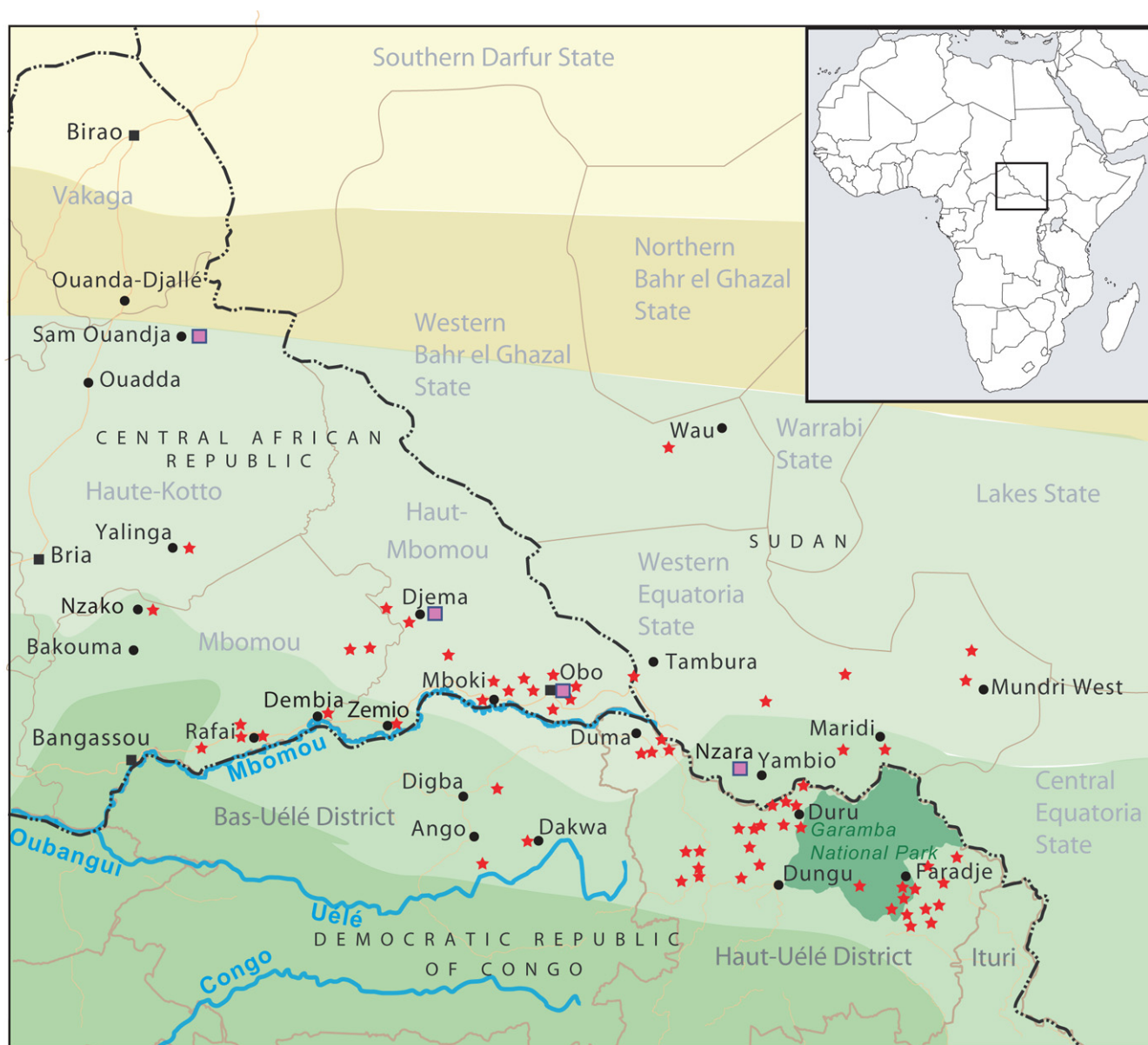
More than a year of Ugandan-led military pressure has dispersed the LRA's fighters over an ever bigger area, making internal communication and cohesion more difficult. But many more years of living in the forest, a brutal control system based on fear and obedience and the ability to recruit new members by force give the organisation the means to survive, with or without Kony. A core factor underlying the LRA's capacity to endure is the inability/unwillingness of the Congolese, Sudanese and Central African authorities to control their border areas.

Stopping the LRA once and for all, therefore, demands a new kind of security response. In the border regions of Central Africa, institutional weakness means states are not the primary security providers as in the conventional international system. Instead a mosaic of actors – foreign militaries, international peacekeepers, civilian self-defence groups – play roles alongside national authorities. It is to be hoped that state authorities will eventually take over their full responsibilities, but that may not be possible for a long time. Because the need for security is urgent, flexible and innovative forms of cooperation are needed to counter the threat that operates in and exploits this semi-stateless zone.

Nairobi/Brussels, 28 April 2010

APPENDIX A

MAP OF LRA ATTACKS IN THE CONGO, SUDAN AND THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC DECEMBER 2008-APRIL 2010



Type of vegetation

- Steppe
- Pseudo - steppe
- Savana (grass)
- Savana (wood)
- Tropical and sub-tropical forest

- LRA attack
- Ugandan Army base
- River
- International border
- National park

0 100 km

APPENDIX B

LRA SECURITY INCIDENTS IN THE CAR

This list is based on Crisis Group interviews and press reports. Because not all LRA attacks are reported, it does not claim to be exhaustive.

May 2009

LRA attacks resumed in the CAR. LRA fighters killed at least ten civilians in the village of Kouroukou (near Obo, Haut-Mbomou prefecture).

20 June 2009

LRA fighters attacked Ligoua (20km south east of Obo, Haut-Mbomou prefecture); they killed one person and seriously injured another.

15 July-1 August 2009

For two weeks, several groups of LRA fighters hit villages within a 20km radius of Obo (Haut-Mbomou prefecture) including Ligoua, Kouroukou, Gassibala, Koubou, Goughéré, Dindiri, Kamou, Bassigbiri and others. They killed at least ten villagers and abducted many more.

21 July 2009

LRA attacked Ligoua (20km south east of Obo, Haut-Mbomou prefecture).

24 July 2009

LRA attacked Mboki (80km west of Obo, Haut-Mbomou prefecture).

5 August 2009

LRA combatants attacked Goughéré (5km north west of Obo, Haut-Mbomou prefecture); they killed one and abducted at least five.

19 August 2009

LRA combatants executed three merchants from Mboki near Ligoua after holding them captive for ten days.

28 August 2009

Two groups of LRA fighters simultaneously attacked the towns of Ngouli and Ngondi (near Obo, Haut-Mbomou prefecture).

14 September 2009

The Ugandan army claimed to have killed LRA commander Lt. Col. Santos Alit and five others 15km north east of Obo, Haut-Mbomou prefecture.

21 September 2009

In the town of Kadjema between Mboki and Obo (Haut-Mbomou prefecture), LRA fighters attacked a lorry the Italian NGO COOPI was using to carry construction equipment. They killed two local employees.

End of October 2009

LRA fighters attacked the village of Derbissaka (120km north east of Rafai, Mbomou prefecture) and reportedly abducted 28 people.

18 November 2009

LRA fighters killed at least eleven people around Djema (100km north of Zemio, Haut-Mbomou prefecture). Other attacks were reported at nearby Fouka.

1 January 2010

The Ugandan army claimed to have killed LRA commander "Brigadier" Bok Abudema near Djema (Haut-Mbomou prefecture).

9 February 2010

LRA fighters attacked Nzako (60km north of Bakouma, Mbomou prefecture); they killed two and abducted around 55 but later freed the majority.

15 February 2010

LRA fighters attacked the village of Kamandaré (40km from Dembia, Mbomou prefecture), kidnapping at least ten people.

17 February 2010

LRA fighters attacked the village of Gbangomboro (7km from Dembia, Mbomou prefecture). Attacks were also reported in Derbissaka (Mbomou prefecture) and Zemio (Haut-Mbomou prefecture).

19 February 2010

LRA fighters attacked Rafai (Mbomou prefecture), killing two people, seriously injuring fourteen and abducting at least 40.

28 February 2010

LRA fighters attacked Yalinga (Haute-Kotto prefecture). They looted the police station, the weather station and a safari camp and abducted 26 people.

20-21 March 2010

LRA fighters attacked the villages of Mboki and Zemio (both in Haut-Mbomou prefecture), killing one person, wounding two and abducting six.

21 March 2010

LRA fighters attacked Agoumar (just outside Rafai, Mbomou prefecture), killing ten people, wounding five and abducting 50 to 60. Villagers trying to defend themselves captured and burned alive one LRA fighter.

25 March 2010

LRA fighters attacked the village of Karmadar (near Rafai, Mbomou prefecture).

28 March 2010

LRA fighters attacked Dembia (Mbomou prefecture). The Ugandan army chased the attackers and announced they had killed fifteen.

28-29 March 2010

LRA attacked Guerekindo (Mbomou prefecture), looting the village and abducting fourteen people.

3 April 2010

In an LRA attack between Bangassou and Rafai (Mbomou prefecture), fighters looted and burned a truck in Guerekindo, killed at least five and wounded at least four.

APPENDIX C

LRA CHRONOLOGY

1986

Alice Lakwena launched the Holy Spirit Mobile Force, a northern Ugandan cultist rebellion against Yoweri Museveni's government.

1987

With 10,000 followers, Lakwena headed south, claiming she would take Kampala and establish a government appointed by God. After government forces defeated her in eastern Uganda, she fled to Kenya.

Dec. 1987

Joseph Kony created the Holy Spirit Mobile Force II. He consolidated the movement by forced recruitment and by absorbing members from other rebel groups. By 1989 he had renamed his group the Lord's Resistance Army.

Jun. 1988

The Ugandan army started major operations against the rebels.

Apr. 1991

The Ugandan army launched the four-month "Operation North" to end the LRA insurgency.

Jan. 1994

Northern Uganda Minister Betty Bigombe started peace talks with the LRA. They broke down after Museveni issued an ultimatum threatening renewed military action if they did not conclude in seven days.

Mar. 1994

The first group of LRA rebels entered southern Sudan.

Feb. 1995

The LRA established bases in southern Sudan.

Apr. 1995

LRA rebels crossed into Uganda from Sudan and massacred more than 400 civilians in Atiak Township, Gulu district. Uganda broke off diplomatic relations with Sudan.

Oct. 1995

Uganda, Ethiopia, Eritrea and the SPLA launched a joint offensive against the LRA and troops loyal to Khartoum in southern Sudan. The operation dislodged the LRA from areas near the Uganda border, but it set up bases deeper in Sudanese territory.

1998

The Acholi Religious Leaders' Peace Initiative presented a memorandum for peace to the Ugandan government.

Dec. 1999

Uganda and Sudan signed the Nairobi Peace Agreement to begin the process of renewing normal diplomatic relations.

Jan. 2000

The Ugandan government enacted the Amnesty Act granting amnesty to any Ugandan willing to abandon rebellion.

Dec. 2001

The U.S. designated the LRA as an international terrorist group.

Dec. 2002

With the agreement of Khartoum, the Ugandan army launched "Operation Iron Fist" against the LRA on Sudanese territory.

2003

The LRA called a unilateral ceasefire followed by a limited government ceasefire. Attempts to start negotiations were unsuccessful.

2003

Museveni referred the situation in Uganda to the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Jan. 2005

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between the Sudanese government and the SPLA ended their conflict, granted autonomy to the South, where the Government of South Sudan (GoSS) was formed, and established that the South would hold a self-determination referendum in 2011.

Jul. 2005

The ICC issued arrest warrants for the LRA's top five leaders, including Kony.

2006

The LRA relocated to the Garamba National Park in north-eastern Congo.

Jul. 2006

Riek Machar, vice president of the Government of South Sudan, began mediating peace talks between the Ugandan government and the LRA in Juba. The then UN Special Envoy for LRA-affected areas, former president of Mozambique Joaquim Chissano, supported the talks.

Nov. 2008

The Juba talks broke down after a recurrence of LRA attacks and Kony refused to sign a final peace agreement, arguing the ICC's arrest warrant had to be lifted first.

14 Dec. 2008

Uganda, South Sudan and the Congo launched Operation Lightning Thunder, a joint military offensive against the LRA's camps in Garamba National Park. An initial airstrike failed to kill the LRA leadership. The LRA scattered in small groups in the Congo, South Sudan and the CAR and increased attacks on civilians.

15 Mar. 2009

Operation Lightning Thunder officially ended, but the Ugandan army continued covert operations in north-eastern Congo with the approval of the Congolese government and began its pursuit of LRA fighters into South Sudan and the CAR.

APPENDIX D

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP

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Crisis Group's approach is grounded in field research. Teams of political analysts are located within or close by countries at risk of outbreak, escalation or recurrence of violent conflict. Based on information and assessments from the field, it produces analytical reports containing practical recommendations targeted at key international decision-takers. Crisis Group also publishes *CrisisWatch*, a twelve-page monthly bulletin, providing a succinct regular update on the state of play in all the most significant situations of conflict or potential conflict around the world.

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